

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Hadleigh

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124760
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328208
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Rob McKeown HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	167
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	Mr Jeff Delves
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Herbert
Date of previous school inspection	15 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Stonehouse Road Hadleigh Ipswich Suffolk IP7 5BH
Telephone number	01473823268

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2009
Inspection number	328208

Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Mary's is a smaller than average primary school. The school roll has fallen since the last inspection and the majority of pupils are now taught in mixed-age classes. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, although this varies from year group to year group. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is also below average. Most children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with skills and aptitudes that are typical for their age. The school achieved Healthy School status in 2007. A breakfast club runs each morning and a local playgroup provides pre-school childcare on the school site. The headteacher has been in post for four years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Mary's provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. It caters well for pupils' personal development and staff want the best for the children in their care. The 'caring and welcoming atmosphere', mentioned by one parent, reflects the positive response from a majority who returned the inspection questionnaire. Although there are no major weaknesses in provision, the school is not as effective as it was at the time of its last inspection. It has come through a period of falling standards, lower achievement and a year with a temporary leadership team. Recent changes in class organisation have unsettled some parents and a significant minority expressed concern about the way in which the school consults and communicates with them. Nevertheless, the headteacher, staff and governors are united in their determination to work together to bring about improvements and fully restore the confidence of all parents. Collectively, they have the capacity to take the school forward.

Most pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in the higher than average levels of attendance. Pupils work well together in lessons and show positive attitudes. Behaviour is good and although some parents who returned the inspection questionnaire believe it could be better, inspectors did not see any unsatisfactory behaviour during their two days in the school. The elected school council represents pupils' views well and meets regularly to discuss ways in which it can help to improve the school. Older pupils help the school run smoothly by taking on responsibilities as monitors and library helpers.

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. The results achieved by Year 6 pupils dipped appreciably two years after the last inspection but improved well in 2008. Targets set for 2009 and the school's interim assessments indicate that the improvements made last year are likely to be sustained. Although the overall picture is satisfactory, the school acknowledges that progress remains inconsistent for some groups of pupils. Standards and achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved since the last inspection. This is because of improvements in the quality of the school's equipment and because pupils are given regular opportunities to develop their computer skills.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Several of the lessons observed during the inspection were good and none was less than satisfactory. However, there is too much variation in the quality of teachers' planning and in the assessment of pupils' learning. In addition, pupils are insufficiently involved in evaluating their own work. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is undergoing a review in order to introduce more practical and skills-based enquiry activities to link learning across a number of subjects. Good pastoral care and support enable pupils to develop positive social skills. The school has begun to develop its assessment methods and systems for tracking progress in order to strengthen academic guidance. These are designed to enable governors, senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers to identify any underachievement.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's leadership team has been strengthened since the start of this academic year with the appointment of a new deputy headteacher. Other key leaders play a positive role in successfully managing aspects of the school's work. The school development plan clearly sets out a number of improvement priorities but these do not include some important aspects of underperformance. The school acknowledges that it needs to sharpen its systems for monitoring and evaluation and take a more strategic view in prioritising future developments. Changes introduced are not always consistently applied

or seen through to successful completion. Governance is satisfactory but governors have been better at giving the school their support than calling it to account for dips in performance.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the EYFS is satisfactory. Children come into the school with skills and aptitudes that are age typical. They make satisfactory progress so that by the time they enter Year 1 all children are working at or above the expected level. There are however, some variations in achievement between boys and girls and across the six areas of learning. Outcomes in personal development are particularly strong. Good systems are in place for tracking children's development. In line with agreed local practice, child profiles for most children are transferred from playgroups and continue to be used throughout EYFS.

Welcoming and supportive staff work well with parents to enable children to quickly settle into the Nursery and establish routines. They ensure that children's physical, emotional and social needs are met well and personal development is good. Children rapidly develop a confident approach to taking turns and sharing with others. They learn to become independent and develop a good knowledge of healthy living. A group of six Nursery children knew that they should wash their hands before handling food and were able to do this without help.

Satisfactory provision is made for children's learning and development. Staff provide a range of thematic topics such as 'birthdays' to ensure that activities and tasks are meaningful and purposeful. Teachers encourage children to develop their speaking and listening skills and use a variety of questioning, the most successful of which encourages children to explain their thinking. There is a suitable balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. The outdoor area is rather compact with no immediate access for physical activities or to a natural environment. This has been identified as an area for further development. Leadership and management in the EYFS are satisfactory with a new team working effectively together.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and consistency in teaching and learning by standardising planning and assessment techniques, and by involving pupils more in the assessment of their work.
- Improve leadership and management by introducing a more strategic approach to self-evaluation and development planning, and by securing more rigorous systems for checking on pupils' attainment and progress.
- Strengthen communication and consultation with parents to improve their understanding of the school's work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards in Key Stage 1 are average. Pupils' attainment in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics had been drifting downward since the last inspection but picked up well last year, although girls' strong performance boosted the overall outcome. Standards are also average in Key Stage 2. In 2007, attainment dipped significantly in Year 6 when results in English, mathematics and science were well below the national percentages. Outcomes were much better

in 2008 and a high percentage of pupils reached or exceeded the expected level. Pupils were also more successful last year in meeting their targets. Good improvements were recorded in 2008 of the proportion of pupils making satisfactory or better progress from their starting points in Year 2. This compares favourably with the inadequate achievement for many pupils who left Year 6 in 2007. Pupils with learning difficulties also make satisfactory progress with many benefiting from the additional support they receive in reading. Progress tracking is being strengthened to sharpen the school's approach to identifying underachievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have good relationships with their teachers and the adults that work with them. They say they feel safe and that any incidents of racism or bullying are very rare. They can talk about eating healthily and know it is important to take exercise as part of leading a healthy lifestyle. Groups of pupils have regular swimming sessions throughout the year and the opportunity to attend sports clubs. Older pupils learn about the dangers of risk taking and they know about safe use of the internet. Pupils say that in their personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons they are encouraged to talk about their feelings. They feel confident about seeking advice from their teacher or a friend should they have a problem. Pupils make positive contributions in the local community when they take part in inter-school and church activities. They also join in with a number of events during the year to raise funds for charity. Year 6 pupils have been trained recently to support younger children's play at lunchtime. Pupils feel comfortable within their own community and they are familiar with some of the world religions. They know less about the diversity of cultures throughout the United Kingdom and in other parts of the world.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and as a result, pupils make satisfactory progress. Several good lessons were seen during the inspection. In these lessons, confident, well-prepared teachers designed work that was interesting and engaged pupils well, resulting in good progress. Teachers are often well supported by teaching assistants and this benefits individuals and groups of pupils. The school has arranged an appropriate variety of teaching groups at different times of the day in order to meet the different needs of pupils, for example, ability sets in mathematics. Pupils are managed well and respond positively to the expectations made of them by their teachers. Inspectors saw a number of satisfactory lessons. In these, there were too few opportunities for pupils to use and develop their speaking skills, activities were not matched precisely enough to pupils' learning needs and insufficient emphasis was placed on assessing learning outcomes. Pupils' work is marked frequently but does not always include adequate guidance about how to improve presentation and handwriting skills. Although ICT provision is much better since the last inspection and some teachers use interactive whiteboards imaginatively, others remain less confident users of ICT in support of their teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Curriculum provision is satisfactory. The full range of subjects is taught and includes French. There is an appropriately strong focus on pupils acquiring key literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Senior leaders intend that the curriculum should be more exciting for pupils, more relevant and more coherent, but plans for this are at an early stage. Teachers plan useful visits to generate interest in lessons and organise special days when pupils focus on a theme, such as book characters or circus skills. The curriculum for PSHE contributes suitably to pupils' good personal development. Pupils who need to catch up in reading join well-organised support groups but the school acknowledges that this could be extended to include similar groups for basic numeracy skills. Curriculum enrichment is good. Older children experience a good range of outdoor and adventurous activities during a residential visit to a field study centre. There is a variety of after school clubs provided for most age groups and the school's sporting teams enjoy success in local competitions. A small computer suite and a set of laptops have improved ICT provision. The re-location of the library is also a positive improvement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Improvements in managing the behaviour of a small number of more challenging pupils have reduced the number of incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour recorded this school year. There are good procedures to promote above average attendance and keeping checks on any pupils who might become persistent absentees. Appropriate arrangements are in place for ensuring pupils' safety, such as making regular risk assessments, and the school meets the statutory requirements for safeguarding. Staff work well with external agencies to support any pupils with additional needs. Transition arrangements with the on-site pre-school are improving and a morning breakfast club is available for early arrivals. Staff have recently identified those pupils who have special gifts or talents and some of these pupils have started to take part in additional learning opportunities. The school has worked hard at keeping parents informed about what their children do in school. This is done well through the publication of the 'Blue Bazaar', a magazine that informs parents about school events and their children's achievements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior leaders are suitably focused on raising standards and improving pupils' achievement. The school has begun to tackle some of the less effective aspects of its monitoring and evaluation systems. Working closely with the headteacher, the new deputy headteacher has set about establishing a more rigorous system for keeping a close check on pupils' attainment and progress. Ambitious targets have been set for pupils' achievement at the end of Year 6. The work of other key leaders is satisfactory and in some respects good, for example in mathematics, where the subject leader has provided a detailed report for governors on the quality of provision. The support for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is managed well. The good improvements made in ICT provision since the last inspection have been coordinated effectively by the school's higher level teaching assistant. The leadership team has completed regular monitoring of teaching and learning but

this has yet to have a significant impact on improving the overall consistency and quality of lessons. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory with several positive links established with local groups. Governors know the school well and their roles, responsibilities and involvement in committee work are clearly defined. Key governors provide the school with good support and make regular visits to see it in action. Governors acknowledge that they have been less effective at challenging the school to improve.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

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

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?	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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

15 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Hadleigh, IP7 5BH

Thank you for helping us with our inspection work when we visited your school. We enjoyed the two days we spent with you. Please thank your parents for completing the questionnaires about their views of the school.

It is our opinion that St Mary's Primary School is satisfactory. Some things are going quite well and some things need improving. All the staff care for you and want you to do well. I had an interesting discussion with the school council who told me a lot about what they like to do at school and how they meet to discuss things that might be improved. They confirmed our view that most of you get on well together and enjoy the company of your friends. When we visited your lessons to watch you at work we were pleased to see that you listen and behave well and that your teachers give you interesting things to do. It was good to see some of you having the chance to use the interactive whiteboards and improving your computer skills. When we looked at your books, we noticed that you had completed a lot of work but that some of it was untidy. We like the idea of having targets to help you improve. It was good to see that you have the chance to take part in several different club activities and we were impressed with your school magazine the 'Blue Bazaar'.

At the end of the inspection, we asked Mrs Herbert, the staff and governors to make some improvements. We would like them to keep a closer check on how well you are doing in your work, and make a good plan for the school's future. We also asked your teachers to make sure all your lessons are good ones, and to work closely together when planning your lessons and checking on your progress. Lastly, we asked everyone to make sure your parents understand what is going on in school and get the chance to give their points of view on how it might be improved.

You have much to look forward to in the rest of the year. I hope you do your best and enjoy it.

With best wishes

Rob McKeown

Her Majesty's Inspector