

St Mary's CofE (VC) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103837
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	336174
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Linda Rockey HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Rachael Thornton
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Perkins
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The majority of time was spent looking at learning and eight teachers were observed at least once. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents, and met with representatives from three partnerships. Inspectors observed the work of the school, and looked at policies related to the safeguarding of pupils, documents to support the school's self-evaluation, and the school's assessment data. Inspectors analysed questionnaires from 63 parents and carers, and looked at responses from 23 staff and 95 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well assessment is used and whether there is enough challenge for the more able pupils, particularly in English and mathematics
- what the school is doing to improve the quality of teaching, especially in writing
- the effectiveness of new leaders and managers in strengthening capacity for improvement.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average school. Most pupils are of a White British background, with a small proportion from other heritages. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Early Years Foundation Stage education is provided in a Reception class. Since the last inspection there have been some staff changes and the number of pupils on roll has fallen. A new headteacher started in September 2009. The school has achieved several awards, including the Healthy Schools standard.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is an improving school. Since her arrival in September, the headteacher has made a significant impact. She has created a strong staff team who are working with her to drive school improvement. They have responded positively to her clear and focused leadership and as a result there is a clear sense of common purpose. Inspectors met a wide range of parents. The majority are pleased with their children's experience at St Mary's. They appreciate the new 'open door' policy and believe they are well informed about their children's well-being and progress. One parent wrote on her questionnaire, 'We are very impressed with the new headteacher - she is fully involved in the life of the school and seems 100% committed to the improvement of standards.'

The school is a caring and inclusive one. It provides well for lower attaining pupils, those who are vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, the majority of these pupils make good progress. Higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and stretched; consequently, they do not achieve so well in lessons and few reach the higher levels in the assessments at the end of Year 6. Spiritual development is an outstanding feature of this school. Collective worship is a time of reflection and joyful singing. Such features contribute to an environment where pupils feel highly safe and secure, and behave impeccably well. However, the school has been slow to establish links further afield to extend pupils' awareness of other faiths in the Midlands and in the wider world.

Since the last inspection, standards have remained broadly average except in 2008, when they rose significantly to above average. Staff attribute this to the support provided by the local authority that year. They recognise that although there has been some improvement since September, standards in writing remain the weakest area. The headteacher is well aware of the challenge to raise standards and accelerate progress in order to make sure pupils in Year 6 reach above national averages in English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but variable, particularly in writing. Regular feedback from the monitoring of classroom practice is helping staff to understand what good teaching looks like. However, there is not enough sharing of good and outstanding practice. Recently, school leaders recognised that they do not make enough use of assessment information, and they have now established a systematic approach to tracking and reviewing the progress pupils make. This is beginning to have a beneficial effect as each teacher is held to account for the progress of every individual in their class.

The school's self-evaluation is mainly accurate and the school development plan

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comprehensive. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory. Although the headteacher has been in post for a relatively short time, she has a good grasp about what needs to be done and has made an effective start to remedy the weaknesses identified.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and accelerate progress, particularly in writing, by:
 - using the new tracking system to ensure pupils make good progress as they move through the school and intervening when improvement slows
 - ensuring regular, ongoing assessment in lessons to check that all pupils make good progress and are track to reach their ambitious targets.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory to good by:
 - developing a consistent approach to teaching all the relevant skills in writing
 - ensuring tasks are consistently challenging and tailored to meet the needs of all pupils, especially the more able
 - sharing the good and excellent practice which exists in the school and using examples from partner schools.
- Extend pupils' appreciation and understanding of the diversity of cultures and faiths in the United Kingdom and the wider world by instigating plans to develop this aspect of pupils' education.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may
 - receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5
 - inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Almost all pupils say they enjoy school. Inspectors were impressed by the level of maturity shown by pupils of all ages. They work and play together in harmony. Although a small minority of parents referred to some incidents of unacceptable behaviour, no examples of this were seen during the inspection. Pupils show a good understanding of issues relating to healthy living, as reflected in their Healthy Schools award, and have an excellent understanding of personal safety. Pupils, parents and carers all agree that the school is a safe place to be. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility around the school. They willingly take turns to supervise the outside doors when school starts and take responsibility for supervising younger children around the school. They investigate moral and ethical issues. Year 6 pupils enthusiastically related their recent experience of a debate about the intensive farming of chickens. However, the limitations of pupils' cultural development mean the overall judgement for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory rather than good.

Observations in lessons and a review of pupils' work show that most pupils are now making satisfactory progress and standards overall were broadly average and rising.

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Progress in writing is improving. When pupils are engaged in purposeful and relevant learning, progress is clearly evident. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make better progress than other pupils. This is because they receive regular good quality support in small groups from a teacher or teaching assistant. Where assessment is used well and pupils of all abilities are suitably challenged, progress is good, but this is not always the case.

In an effective mathematics lesson, the more able pupils were provided with a challenging investigation. They were motivated to work independently to discover facts about the sum of the internal angles of any triangle. At the end of the lesson, two higher attaining pupils were able to articulate the outcome of their investigation and clearly explain the reasons for their findings. Such examples point the way forward for the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and support staff have good relationships with the pupils. Classrooms are well organised and stimulating but not all staff have sufficiently high expectations of what

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

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pupils can achieve. As a result, they do not always give them sufficiently challenging work matched to their ability. The school enriches the curriculum by educational visits and visitors. During the inspection pupils and staff thoroughly enjoyed dressing up as their favourite book characters for World Book Day. Year 6 pupils talked excitedly about a recent visit from a well-known author. They were inspired by his talk about his book. Pupils obviously enjoy visits from the vicar and look forward to looking after 'Father Ted'. The pupils' take-up of extra-curricular activities shows that many benefit from the after-school clubs available.

The committed staff have a good understanding of how to support individuals with specific learning needs, and what they provide is carefully planned and targeted. The school works productively with a range of agencies to support individual pupils. The special needs co-ordinator demonstrates a tenacious approach to meeting the needs of the lower attaining pupils and involves parents effectively. As one appreciative parent commented, 'My child had a few speech difficulties which were noticed very quickly and were acted upon by both teachers and outside sources.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders have an unequivocal focus on improvement and as a result, standards are rising. Senior leaders have begun to accurately monitor the quality of teaching and focus on accelerating progress through regular meetings to discuss individual pupils. The new chair of governors has an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This enables her to check the work of the school regularly and feed back to the whole governing body. She is encouraging other new governors to get involved and provide more challenge and support.

Engagement with parents and carers is an emerging strength of the school. A large majority of parents and carers expressed positive views about the school. This reflects the good relationships that prevail between parents and carers and staff, and pupils' enjoyment of school. The staff canvass parents' and carers' views on important issues and regular newsletters aid communications.

Since September, most policies have been updated and all staff are aware of relevant procedures regarding child protection. All statutory requirements for safeguarding and health and safety were in place at the time of the inspection. The school's inclusive ethos supports equal opportunities and pupils' entitlement to education. The school

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works well with partners such as the high school to support pupils' health, welfare, social and learning needs. The school promotes cohesion well within its own community, helped by the good relationships established with pupils by teachers and support staff. Although there are positive links with Gambia, the school has more to do to extend pupils' experiences and understanding of the wider world. The headteacher and chair of governors are well aware of the school improvement issues. Some areas have not been tackled yet due to urgent staffing matters, including the need for staff restructuring because of a falling roll in the local area.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage because of an induction process that involves parents and carers well. Children behave well and are keen to join in activities they have chosen or those led by an adult. Daily routines are well established and there is a sound sharing of relevant information to inform the next stages in planning. Children generally start with the skills and understanding expected nationally for their age, and make satisfactory progress across the areas of learning. The learning environment is nurturing and secure with good opportunities for use of the outside area when there is sufficient supervision. Adults have a sound knowledge of the learning and development needs of children and this is reflected in staff planning. There is an appropriate emphasis on early literacy and problem solving. Learning objectives provide sufficient challenge to interest and engage children, but assessment and tracking of individual children lack rigour and challenge for the more able. As a result, activities are not matched well enough to individual needs to promote the rapid

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development of skills. Relationships are good and good attention is paid to personal safety and health issues. Adults work well together and have the children's interests at heart.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Most of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire said they agree or strongly agree that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. A very small minority of parents and carers were critical of the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team did not agree with them, and found clear records of effective behaviour management. Furthermore, behaviour during the inspection was outstanding.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's CofE (VC) Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 63 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 170 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	49	30	48	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	65	22	35	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	40	34	54	4	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	37	36	57	2	3	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	26	41	32	51	4	6	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	44	30	48	2	3	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	33	40	63	0	0	1	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	21	33	35	56	3	5	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	35	35	56	2	3	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	27	32	51	10	16	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	22	39	62	4	6	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	24	38	31	49	4	6	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	49	26	41	3	5	2	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



8 March 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of St Mary's CofE (VC) Primary School, Kingswinford DY6 7AQ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school last week.

We judged it to be a satisfactory school. We agree with your parents and carers that you are in safe hands and we know you like school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you both at work and play. Here are some of the main things we found.

Your behaviour, both in class and around the school, is excellent.

You know how to lead safe and healthy lives and enjoy helping each other.

Teaching is satisfactory and you make sound progress in lessons. Those of you with special educational needs make better progress because of the help you receive in class or individually.

You get on well together and with the adults in school and we were impressed by your maturity.

There is still a lot of work to do to make St Mary's the best it can be. Your school leaders know how to improve it. I have asked the governors, headteacher and staff to raise standards by:

- keeping a closer eye on your work to ensure you make good progress, especially in writing, and reach your targets each term
- helping you to become better writers by teaching you all the relevant skills
- giving your teachers more opportunities to see models of good and outstanding teaching so that you are all challenged to do as well as possible, including those of you who sometimes find learning easy
- ensuring that you have lots more opportunities to learn about how other pupils live, and what they believe, elsewhere in this country and the wider world.

Thank you for being so polite and helpful to us. We really enjoyed your World Book Day. Your outfits were impressive! Make sure you do your bit to improve your school by working hard to improve your writing and reach your targets.

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Yours sincerely

Linda Rockey

Her Majesty's Inspector

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