

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113478
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	338180
Inspection dates	27–28 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	61
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev David Arnott
Headteacher	Jane Byrne
Date of previous school inspection	28 April 2010
School address	Elliott's Hill Plymouth PL8 2AG
Telephone number	01752 880436
Fax number	01752 880436
Email address	head@stmarys-brixton.devon.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. One of the inspectors focused mainly on safeguarding. Ten lessons or part lessons were observed and four teachers were seen. The inspection team observed the school's work and examined its policies, assessments, pupils' work, teachers' plans and school improvement planning. Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils. There were informal conversations with parents. The inspectors analysed 20 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and others by staff and pupils.

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

- improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage
- how well pupils perform in writing
- the effectiveness of evaluation and improvement planning by all leaders and managers.

Information about the school

St Mary's C of E is a much smaller than average primary school. Virtually all pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is about average, but a higher-than-average proportion has a statement of special educational needs. The nature of these difficulties include severe learning and physical difficulties. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children in Reception. At the time of the inspection the substantive headteacher was absent through long-term illness. Since January 2010 the school has been led by a headteacher of a local school. She leads both schools and spends two and a half days a week on the St Mary's site.

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

St Mary's CofE Primary provides a satisfactory education. There are some good aspects to its work and there are signs of recent improvements. Good care, guidance and support and a positive school atmosphere contribute well to pupils' personal development. Pupils are friendly and polite and relate very well to adults and to their peers. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, and in Years 5 and 6 it is often exemplary. Pupils feel safe and show a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They make valuable contributions to the school and to the local community such as participating in village events. Attendance levels are now above average.

Most year groups enter the Reception class with knowledge and skills broadly expected for their age. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children make good progress in their personal and social development. Outdoor learning facilities are limited and children do not always have sufficient opportunities to choose activities and learn independently. Children are making satisfactory progress in most areas of learning.

Attainment by the end of Year 6 fluctuates because of the relatively small numbers in year groups. It is currently broadly average. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. They make good progress in mathematics and good progress in Year 5 and 6. Teaching is satisfactory. There are examples of good practice, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Teaching here is stimulating and learning maintains a brisk pace. All teachers build good relationships with their class. The purpose of the lesson is not always clearly shared with the pupils. The pace of learning can decline when teachers talk too long in their introductions and explanations. Activities are not always well matched to pupils' abilities and needs. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of additional activities which enhance pupils' enjoyment.

The relatively new executive headteacher is experienced and provides good direction. She is firmly focused on improving teaching and the curriculum to raise pupils' achievement. Self-evaluation is accurate and this is leading to sharper improvement planning. Good quality action planning for leadership and management and pupils' performance in English are having a positive impact. Other key leaders are new to their role and skills in evaluation and improvement planning are developing. Governors are supportive but are not checking improvements with sufficient rigour. There have been some good improvements recently but improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory. There is a sound capacity for further improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that children make good progress in all areas of learning by:
 - providing exciting activities that are carefully planned to meet children's varying needs
 - extending the range of outdoor learning activities and facilities
 - providing more opportunities for children to choose activities and learn independently.
- Improve teaching from satisfactory to good so that pupils make consistently good progress in Key Stage 1 and 2 by:
 - ensuring that the purpose of the lesson is shared with the class so pupils know what they are expected to learn
 - ensuring that learning in lessons maintains a good pace
 - sharing the best practice across the school.
- Strengthen the role of subject leaders and governors so that all play a full part in evaluating performance, action planning and bringing about improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enjoy their time at school and are achieving satisfactorily. By the end of Year 6 attainment is average overall and just above average in mathematics. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They told the inspector, 'You always learn something new' and 'We take something home that we did not know before.'

In Years 5 and 6 many pupils are articulate and confident speakers because of the good opportunities provided for pupils to discuss their work in pairs and groups. This good practice is beginning to be adopted in other class. In a good mathematics lesson pupils in Years 5 and 6 used their knowledge and understanding of fractions and percentages well to create imaginative cocktails from a range of fruit juices. They measured the ingredients accurately, tested their product and recorded their findings. In the English lesson that followed, pupils discussed the features of effective advertising as they planned and wrote a letter to persuade a business to sell their cocktails.

The school is improving pupils' performance in writing and sound progress is being made here. Pupils write for different purposes and in different styles. However, writing tasks do not always fully extend the more able, particularly in Years 1 and 2. There are some good examples of pupils applying and developing their writing skills in a range of subjects, but this practice is not consistent across the school. All groups of pupils make similar progress to their counterparts nationally, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in their consideration for others and ability to work collaboratively. They show a good knowledge and understanding of different religions. Pupils feel well cared for at school

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and are confident that there is always a trusted adult they can turn to if they are worried or upset. Pupils take on additional responsibilities such as serving on the school council. They participate in a range of local community events such as carol singing, the village fete and church services. Pupils are reasonably well prepared for the future and their economic well-being. Their personal and social skills are well developed. Pupils' numeracy skills are developing well and their literacy and information communication and technology skills are developing satisfactorily.

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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers create a positive classroom climate in which pupils can learn. Teachers do not always convey at the start of the lesson what pupils are expected to know, understand and do. Teachers' instruction and explanations are clear and informative. Questioning is usually used well to check pupils' understanding. Learning time can be lost when lessons do not get off to a prompt start. Learning can also decline when pupils are sitting and listening to the teacher for too long when they are eager and ready to move on to the main task. Teaching assistants are generally used well to support learning, particularly

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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for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The curriculum promotes satisfactory progress for pupils and contributes well to their personal development. Links between subjects which add meaning and relevance to learning are developing steadily. Health education and the additional sporting activities make a valuable contribution to pupils' healthy lifestyles. Pupils have good opportunities to play a musical instrument such as the flute and guitar. Popular clubs include athletics, cookery, dance and football. They are much enjoyed by the pupils and support their personal development well.

Good care, support and guidance underpin the school's ethos. Strong relationships between adults and pupils are a clear strength in the school. Parents new to the school comment how quickly their children settle in. Procedures to promote good attendance and good behaviour are working well. There are good examples where the school has provided specific support and guidance to meet pupils' particular needs.

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 and managers are effectively promoting good care and good personal outcomes for pupils. The executive headteacher has a clear vision and plan to improve teaching and the curriculum to accelerate pupils' progress from satisfactory to consistently good. The English coordinator leads by example in the classroom and is developing her area of responsibility well. Leaders of mathematics, science and the Early Years Foundation Stage are new to the role and have had insufficient time to have had an impact.

Governors are supportive and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths. Statutory requirements are met. The governing body are becoming more focused on raising pupils' academic performance. There are satisfactory procedures to protect and safeguard pupils. However, some of the policies relating to this area are not reviewed regularly enough. Furthermore, improvements in this area are not always communicated to parents and carers. Equality is promoted satisfactorily and discrimination is tackled effectively. Leaders are aware that there is more to do before all groups of pupils are achieving well. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily. The school has positive links with the local community, such as the church. Different cultures and faiths are promoted through the curriculum and there are plans to extend opportunities to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of the global world.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
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 have settled well in the Reception class. Adults have good relationships with children and the leadership ensures that good attention is given to their welfare. As a result, children feel secure and safe and grow in confidence. Most enjoy their learning and relate well to their peers. Children make good progress in their personal and social development. Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory and children make sound progress in other areas of learning. The new headteacher and staff have identified the need to review and improve provision and work has begun. There are appropriate systems to assess and record children's attainment. Some activities lack clear purpose and are not sufficiently linked to the main theme. The balance of adult-led activities and those chosen by children is not secure as there are insufficient opportunities for children to choose activities and learn independently. Outdoor learning activities and equipment is limited. Improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage since the last inspection have been satisfactory.

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

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Views of parents and carers

The inspection team received a reasonable response to the survey with about one third of the parents and carers returning the questionnaire. Most are happy with their child's experience at the school. They are pleased with the sense of enjoyment and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. The inspection team supports these positive views.

A small minority of parents have concerns about how well unacceptable behaviour is managed, how well the school helps them to support their child's learning and the quality of leadership and management. Inspectors found that most pupils are well-behaved and that the very few pupils with challenging behaviour are well managed and supported by staff. The current headteacher recognises that there is more the school can do to help parents and carers to support their children's learning and there are plans to address this. Parents and carers are understandably concerned about the uncertain nature of the leadership of the school. However, the executive headteacher is an experienced and successful leader doing a good job in the time available.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's C of E Primary 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 20 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 62 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	11	55	8	40	1	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	10	50	6	30	2	10	1	5
The school informs me about my child's progress	12	60	6	30	2	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	55	7	35	1	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	70	5	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	60	3	15	3	15	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	55	8	40	0	0	0	0
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)	10	50	6	30	1	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	55	8	40	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	45	6	30	3	15	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	60	5	25	2	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	10	50	5	25	3	15	1	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	9	45	10	50	0	0	0	0

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



29 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary, Brixton, Plymouth, PL8 2AG

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we found. Yours is a satisfactory school. There are some good features.

These are the school's main strengths.

- You enjoy school and your attendance is good.
- The school is a pleasant place in which to learn.
- Pupils in the Year 5 and 6 classes are making good progress.
- There is a wide range of additional activities such as clubs
- You get on well with each other and behaviour is good.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and fit.
- You feel safe at school because the teachers and other adults take good care of you and provide strong support and guidance.
- You make positive contributions to the school and to the local community.

We have asked the headteacher and teachers to do a few things to improve areas of the school.

- To help children in the Reception class make better progress, we have asked the teachers to provide a wider range of exciting activities.
- Some of you in Key Stages 1 and 2 could be making better progress in lessons. We have asked the teachers to make the purpose of the lesson clear, to match the work more carefully to your abilities, especially those of you who find learning easy, and to move on to the main part of lessons more quickly.
- New subject leaders need further support and training so they can check and improve their areas of responsibility. The governors can check how well planned improvements are working.

You can help by continuing to work hard. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts

Lead inspector

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