

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Burnham-on-Crouch

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115159
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338521
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Graham Preston

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	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pauline Wells
Headteacher	Mrs Geraldine Denham-Hale
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The majority of inspection time was spent looking at learning which included observing all seven class teachers in 16 lessons. Meetings were held with governors, groups of pupils and staff. Different aspects of the school's work were observed and documentation scrutinised, including that relating to safeguarding practices, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, as well as 112 returned parental questionnaires.

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

- the extent to which school data and observations indicate improvement even though overall outcomes remain satisfactory
- how far the school has succeeded in strengthening teaching and assessment, especially in Years 3 to 6
- the strength of the school's partnerships and links with the community and their impact on pupils' learning and development
- school leadership, including governance, and its capacity to take the school forward.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than the average primary school. Pupils come from a mix of private and local authority housing within the town of Burnham and the surrounding villages. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage with very few at an early stage of English acquisition. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has steadily increased and is now above the national average. The school has gained the International School award, Healthy School status, Activemark and the Green Flag award.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Mary's is a satisfactory school. It has a considerable number of good features. The leadership team, well supported by governors and staff, has responded appropriately to the last report and improved various aspects of the school. However, these have yet to have a full impact on overall standards and pupils' progress.

The school's intake has changed and pupils come in to the school with attainment that is below expectations for their age, though the good provision in the Reception class helps them to develop well in most areas. Pupils continue to learn well and make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and reach standards a little above the national average. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' progress is satisfactory in spite of current efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning. There are indications that such improvements should raise standards in future, though Year 6 contains many pupils with low prior attainment who joined the school during the key stage. Effective support ensures that these pupils achieve as well as their classmates.

In many respects, pupils' personal development is good because of an inclusive Christian ethos which encourages in pupils an awareness and strong commitment to sustainable development and global issues. A distinctive feature of the school's work is its commitment to taking an active part in the local, national and international community. As a result, many pupils show a concern for others and a readiness to discuss ideas and take on responsibility. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and very few have concerns about bullying. The class and school councils are very active and given considerable responsibility. The pupils are involved in many other ways, for example as members of the 'eco team' which is involved in school and community projects, as physical education ambassadors promoting healthy lifestyles, and in the various partnerships between older and younger pupils that encourage them to 'look out for each other'. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because of these many aspects. In particular, cultural development is a very strong feature resulting from the considerable effort to encourage in pupils a broader perspective through the many links with schools and groups in other countries.

Teaching is satisfactory overall though a significant amount is good or contains good features. The quality of teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 but more mixed in the older classes. Relationships are good in all classes and planning ensures that most lessons have a clear purpose that enables pupils to make satisfactory and quite often good progress in their learning. Teachers endeavour to provide learning targets that accommodate the different needs of pupils but often these do not sufficiently take account of the wide range of abilities in the class. The conscientious learning assistants help considerably in supporting learning, though overly

long whole-class activities limit their use on occasion. Marking is regular and some is very helpful in showing pupils how to improve, but this is not consistently good across the different classes. The curriculum has considerable strengths in terms of extra-curricular opportunities and those aspects that contribute positively to pupils' personal and social development. Pupils' good behaviour and attendance, as well as the school's effective work in supporting pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, reflect the good care, guidance and support.

School leadership has steadily improved through developing experience and good appointments at senior and subject leadership levels. There are strengths in a number of areas and leaders have initiated numerous positive developments. However, at times the range of initiatives conflicts with the need to prioritise those that improve standards and rigorously evaluate their impact. Senior leaders are now beginning to prioritise more effectively and improvements in provision have been helped by recruitment and training. However, these have yet to be reflected fully in terms of improvements in pupils' attainment and progress. The school is accurate in its self-evaluation, including that of teaching and learning, and is well placed to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, especially at Key Stage 2, so that it is consistently good across all years by:
 - providing a wider range of learning targets that take account of the wide spectrum of abilities and needs in all the classes
 - providing more detailed guidance to pupils on how they can improve their work and reach their targets
 - ensuring an appropriate balance of whole-class, individual and group work that makes the best use of the learning assistants.
- Improve those aspects of school development that relate to standards and progress by:
 - prioritising actions directly relating to raising standards
 - rigorously evaluating the impact of new initiatives on pupils' learning
 - identifying staff training that is likely to have the greatest impact on pupils' progress.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils move from the Reception class to Year 1 with good social skills, though their literacy and numeracy skills are a little below average. Learning and progress in Years 1 and 2 are generally good, with most pupils achieving standards a little above those

nationally in the end of Key Stage 1 assessments. The challenge for the school has been to build on that good progress in later years. There have been improvements in both the quality of teaching and the curriculum, which ensure that learning is good in an increasing number of lessons. The school's detailed tracking of pupil's progress indicates that the great majority make sufficient progress to reach their expected levels at the end of Year 6. Hindering the school's efforts to raise standards has been the considerable turnover in the Year 6 cohort with half the pupils joining the school in the last few years, many with low prior attainment. The school has worked hard, through its support strategies, to ensure these pupils reach their expected targets.

In other ways, the school has built on the strengths identified in the last inspection and made further improvements, most notably in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is outstanding. Attendance has improved and is now above that nationally and pupils behave responsibly in lessons and around the school. The school has a strong Christian ethos, complemented by a considerable commitment to the local community, sustainable development and the international dimension. The latter provides many opportunities in lessons for pupils to communicate with pupils in other countries including Kenya, Germany, France, Poland and Turkey and does much to broaden pupils' awareness of the wider community.

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

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

The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**1****How effective is the provision?**

Teaching is satisfactory with some good features and has improved through the recruitment of new staff and continued staff development. Teacher-pupil relationships in all lessons are good and almost all teachers effectively manage their classes in ways that channel pupils' enthusiasm and focus their attention. Staff make good use of the electronic whiteboards and other technology to introduce and discuss new ideas with the class. Staff plan thoroughly and in the best lessons, this ensures that the learning activities are appropriately challenging to the very wide range of ability. However, the school recognises that this good practice is not consistent across the school. Work is regularly marked with encouraging comments. However, pupils are not clear about how they can improve their work and variability in marking and assessment is slowing improvements in this area.

The curriculum has for some time had considerable strengths in terms of the range of extra-curricular activities and the school makes extensive use of the local and international community to enhance learning. More recently there has been a rigorous mapping of key skills across the different subject areas and the introduction of more effective learning schemes in numeracy and literacy. The 'Talk 5' initiative for example, which makes use of drama in speaking and listening, is proving successful in encouraging pupils' extended writing. In numeracy, the use of an established learning scheme incorporating use of information and communication technology, and the combining and setting of Years 5 and 6, are better meeting pupils' widely different numeracy skills.

Care, guidance and support is a consistent strength of the school and reflects its inclusive ethos. The school has a range of measures to encourage attendance that have proved effective. The increase in the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has increased in recent years. It has also absorbed a considerable number of pupils from outside and some of these also have considerable personal needs. In these areas, the school has been successful in identifying and meeting those 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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership team provides the necessary drive for school improvement and has had success in a number of areas. Governors are very involved and have provided good support to the leadership team as it has developed over the last three years. Governors are well informed: they participate in regular reviews of provision and contribute to school development.

In many respects, the management of the school is good. Numerous parents and carers help support school activities and the school communicates well with them. It makes very good use of its website to share information with parents and carers, and for home study and revision. The caring and inclusive ethos of the school is reflected in its good safeguarding arrangements. The school makes good use of its partnerships with other agencies to ensure that pupils are protected. Regular links with the local schools consortium support staff development. The school pays good attention to ensuring that pupils have equal opportunities, carefully monitoring the progress of different groups of pupils through a rigorous tracking system. The school promotes community cohesion exceptionally well. Governors were involved in an initial audit which demonstrated strong local and some international links and the school has built on these through its 'sustainable development framework' which also includes a concern for the environment. Through this, the school has developed links with schools in Kenya, Germany, Turkey and Poland that are actively used by pupils, and has developed contrasting national links with a London school.

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	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in Early Years Foundation Stage are cared for very well, because staff help them to settle in and gain confidence so that they feel secure. They start with attainment generally below that expected for their age but because the teacher plans well for their learning, they make good progress, particularly in their physical and creative development and their knowledge and understanding of the world. Teaching is based on the careful assessment of each child and focuses closely on an individual's particular need. Those who need support are identified promptly and support put in place to help them. By the time they leave the Reception class, most children reach the expected goals in most areas of learning, though attainment is a little below expectations in literacy and numeracy. Particular emphasis is placed on developing children's weak language skills and the improvement is significant. Records and observations show that children are making good progress in their knowledge of sounds and word recognition.

A stimulating range of tasks and activities motivates children to enjoy their learning and develop a good degree of independence. These provide opportunities for children to engage in role play, write and extend their mathematical skills. They share readily and play well with each other, and are keen to take on responsibilities as 'eco monitors' for their class. Children's welfare is given utmost priority. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led well and the staff work well together to ensure that the children have a positive start to their school lives. The teacher assesses children's progress well and uses the information gained to plan for effective learning. Parents are kept fully informed about the progress their children are making through day-to-day contact with the teacher.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The large majority are positive about the school, particularly about its caring and supportive ethos. Parents are similarly appreciative of much of the teaching and recognise the progress the school has made in improving the quality of teaching and learning. A number are still concerned about the progress their children are making. The school, rightly, recognises that while it has improved in this area there is still more to do. A number of parents feel that behaviour could be better in some instances. Inspectors found behaviour to be good in lessons and around the school. There has been an increase in the number of pupils with particular personal and behavioural concerns but these are handled well by the school's good care and support systems.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Burnham-on-Crouch 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 112 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 184 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	50	49	44	5	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	52	46	56	50	4	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	33	29	71	63	8	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	29	58	52	16	14	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	35	31	68	61	5	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	35	56	50	11	10	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	47	42	61	54	3	3	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)	29	26	59	53	9	8	3	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	32	54	48	16	14	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	28	59	53	10	9	5	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	27	62	55	13	12	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	31	28	66	59	8	7	4	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	39	53	47	11	10	1	1

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.



10 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School,
Burnham-on-Crouch, CM0 8LZ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Yours is a satisfactory school. It has a considerable number of good features. Most of you do as well as expected by the time you leave in Year 6. Your school is a happy, friendly place to be. It is especially good to see how you like to be actively involved in the various aspects of the school such as the school and class councils, the eco team and in sport and arts activities. Many of you get involved in the local Burnham activities such as the carnival. Even more impressive is the way your school has helped you to make contact with pupils in other countries such as Kenya, Germany, Turkey, Australia and Poland.

Many of your parents told us how much many of you like school. It is certainly true that most of you get on with your teachers and want to do well. We know that you appreciate the good teaching and facilities in most of your subjects but some of you said you would like to have a better idea of how well you are doing in school. We have asked the school to make sure that teachers' marking includes information about how you could improve your work. We have asked them to make the work you do in class more varied and to make sure targets match your learning needs.

The headteacher and her staff work hard to keep you safe and help you develop and enjoy school and we have suggested that they look at other ways of helping you to do even better in your subjects.

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful on our visit.

Yours sincerely

Graham Preston

Lead Inspector

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