

Mellor St Mary Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119424
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339437
Inspection dates	22–23 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Eaton

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	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Geoff Gill
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Five lessons were observed, each taught by a different teacher. The inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, staff and the chair of governors. They observed the school's work and looked at safeguarding and other policies, assessment information, and samples of pupils' work. The 89 questionnaires returned by parents were analysed as were those completed by pupils and staff.

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

- the effectiveness of steps to improve writing, especially that of boys, throughout the school
- how well teachers inform pupils about how they can improve their work
- the school's success in enabling pupils to help make decisions concerning their learning and well-being.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school in a village location. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Most pupils are White British. A very small minority of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. None of them has a statement of special educational need. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award. Unregistered after-school childcare, owned and operated by private providers, is accommodated on school premises; it did not form part of this inspection.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pupils leave this good school as well-rounded young people, looking forward with confidence to the next stage in their education. Their outstanding outcomes stem from extremely good care, guidance and support and the school's strong focus on encouraging qualities such as independence and consideration for others. As a result, rates of attendance are high, pupils feel entirely safe in school and their behaviour is exceptionally good. They make an excellent contribution to the school and the wider community, readily taking on a host of significant responsibilities. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 explain that they are making compost in order to grow vegetables for school meals and hence contributing to reducing carbon emissions. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils appreciate that in order to resolve disagreements, 'people must learn to think independently about the right thing to do'. The school provides outstanding value for money because the school achieves such exceptional outcomes.

By the end of Year 6, attainment is above average in English, mathematics and science. However, pupils typically reach higher levels in reading than in writing. Accurate self-evaluation has enabled the school to identify the actions needed to raise attainment in writing. These are already having a positive impact but pupils are still not as successful in writing as in reading. Teaching is good, as are learning and progress. Teachers plan interesting lessons making good use of learning resources. However, activities are not always matched closely enough to what different groups of pupils need to learn next. This occasionally means that tasks are relatively easy for some pupils but are too hard for others to complete without adult support. Leaders have a good track record in moving the school forward. For instance, marking has developed significantly in recent years. Pupils are now much more aware of how they can upgrade their work, and this development has contributed to the way in which their outcomes have gone from strength to even greater strength. The headteacher has created an enthusiastic and hard-working staff team whose efforts are enhanced by highly effective partnerships with parents, other schools, the Church and diverse agencies. All in all, there is compelling evidence of the school's good capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the work set for all groups of pupils is matched consistently to what they each need to learn next.
- Raise attainment in writing so the levels pupils reach are closer to those achieved in reading.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils are confident learners who try hard to be as independent as possible. They are keen to answer questions and are happy to explain or demonstrate to the rest of the class. Pupils help one another to learn, for example, by listening attentively or sharing ideas during paired discussions. They are sensible and constructive when evaluating their own work or that of their classmates. Pupils take pride in presenting their work neatly. Just occasionally, the pace of learning slows; for instance, when lower attaining pupils find tasks too difficult or those who could be working at higher levels are not challenged sufficiently.

When they join the Reception Year, children's skills are in line with or exceed the expectations for their age. From these starting points, all groups make good progress as they move up through the school. Attainment is typically above average but tends to fluctuate year-on-year because cohorts are small and each pupil's performance makes a significant difference to the overall picture. Attainment in writing is improving. For example, boys' performance is now much closer to that of girls'. However, as a rule, pupils reach higher levels in reading than in writing. By Year 6, pupils are able to use a range of punctuation and can structure sentences correctly. In their eagerness to get their ideas down on paper, they occasionally forget to apply these technical aspects of writing, leading to a lack of clarity.

Behaviour around school is exemplary, lessons are never disrupted and pupils confirm that bullying is very rare. They know exactly what to do if they have concerns. Those who are new to the school are delighted with the kindness shown by other pupils and by how quickly they make friends. 'Playground Pals' take their responsibilities very seriously. 'They will give up their own play to help others', commented one boy. The school council provides a forum for pupils to suggest ways of improving school life. Its members decided to raise funds in the aftermath of the Haitian earthquake and have spotted that a storage rack is needed for teachers' bicycles. Pupils are well aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. They are especially keen on physical activity during lessons, playtimes, inter-school matches, and clubs. Pupils are at the heart of the local community. For example, they share their love of making music with a mums and toddlers group. They have a realistic picture of life in countries such as India, through sending and receiving emails to children there.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
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	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers consistently encourage pupils to be independent, providing a wealth of opportunities for them to solve problems or carry out research. Because pupils can be relied upon to apply themselves to their tasks, teachers are able to circulate round the class and provide advice and support to individuals. This is a very positive aspect of teaching but from time to time teachers place too much reliance on this approach as a means of meeting individual needs. On these occasions, the class is set an activity, with no additional challenge for higher attaining pupils or adaptation for those working at lower levels. The expertise of teaching assistants makes a strong contribution to lessons and information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to promote learning. Pupils comment approvingly that there are always things going on in their school. Their view reflects the richness of opportunities to promote learning and personal development. Visits, including a residential for Years 5 and 6, and visitors to school are enjoyable and informative. Most pupils attend lunchtime or after-school clubs, pursuing interests such as golf, street dance or the inter-school writers' group for gifted and talented pupils. Music is another strong feature of the curriculum. All pupils learn to play at least one instrument and the orchestra and choir are very active in the school and wider community. There are some very good examples of planned links between subjects; for example, projects involving literacy, science and ICT, and the school is currently extending this approach in order to organise the curriculum more creatively. Every pupil is known extremely well to all the adults in school. They and their parents have the utmost confidence in the quality of care provided. Staff and leaders are extremely quick to note and respond to any indication that a child might be vulnerable,

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working in close partnership with parents. Pupils joining the school are supported comprehensively and the 'Friends of St Mary' group welcomes new families and organises ongoing social events to help maintain the strong sense of community. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is enhanced by the school's speedy identification of potential difficulties and close liaison with parents and a wide range of professionals and agencies. Transition to secondary school is planned very carefully and effectively.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher very successfully combines her principle role with a significant teaching commitment. Other staff with leadership responsibilities provide valued support, contributing effectively to the drive for improvement. For example, the deputy headteacher takes the lead in analysing pupils' progress and identifying any concerns such as gaps between different groups. This work in turn contributes to the school's success in promoting equal opportunities. For instance, resources and approaches designed to improve boys' writing are having the desired effect. In 2009, more boys than girls reached Level 5 in writing. Monitoring of the school's performance is increasingly systematic and focused. Parents regularly help the school to identify ways forward. Their views have been reflected in developments such as enhancements to the range of clubs. Safeguarding is given high priority, including within the curriculum. As a result, pupils are well informed about how to keep themselves safe. The school actively promotes community cohesion and is itself both close-knit and welcoming. The full extent of the impact of its work beyond the school has not yet been fully evaluated. Governors know the school well, often through first-hand experience, and are committed to developing their expertise further, attending a range of training events.

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	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2

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The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

By the end of the Reception Year, children have made good progress and the large majority are working securely towards the higher end of the range of expectations for their age. Writing tends to be a relatively weaker area, particularly for boys. Children behave extremely well. They are curious about the world around them and take part enthusiastically in activities such as a hunt for creatures and plants in the school grounds. Adults use questions effectively to encourage children to think hard and communicate their ideas. Increasingly, the balance is being shifted from activities led by adults to those chosen by children. This approach, together with enhanced opportunities for role play and learning outdoors, is being adopted in order to provide as well as possible for all children but especially the youngest in the year group. The teacher takes full advantage of opportunities for incidental learning; for instance, using a discussion about favourite fruit as a vehicle to reinforce children's knowledge of the sounds made by letters. Parents are welcomed as partners in promoting their children's learning, for example, by supporting reading at home. The teacher visits all the settings children attend before joining the school. She leads the class team well. All adults contribute to assessing children's learning and are currently enhancing the way in which information about each child's progress and experiences is presented.

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 proportion of questionnaires returned was higher than usual. The views expressed

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were very positive and matched the findings of the inspection. A number of parents wrote enthusiastically about the school's caring ethos and the commitment of staff, both features noted during the inspection. The few negative comments tended to relate to issues related to individual pupils. The inspectors do agree that on occasions pupils could be given work more closely matched to their individual needs.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mellor St Mary Church of England 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 89 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 141 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	65	73	23	26	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	70	79	19	21	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	46	52	41	46	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	52	58	32	36	4	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	61	34	38	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	55	38	43	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	61	33	37	1	1	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)	39	44	44	49	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	55	34	38	4	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	57	36	40	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	54	36	40	3	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	62	70	26	29	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	71	25	28	1	1	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.



26 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mellor St Mary Church of England Primary School, Blackburn, BB2 7JL

Thank you for being so very welcoming when I inspected your school. Special thanks go to the pupils who met with me to talk about the school. These pupils were excellent ambassadors for the school and were extremely helpful. I really enjoyed my short time at Mellor St Mary's and took particular pleasure in your skills as musicians. You told me how much you like your school and I agree with you that yours is a good school. Here are some of the features that are most successful:

- you make good progress in your learning and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6
- you are seldom absent from school and your behaviour, contribution to the community and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding
- you feel entirely safe in school because you are cared for extremely well
- teaching is good in your school and the staff provide an interesting and enjoyable curriculum
- your headteacher and the other leaders are always finding ways to keep the school improving.

I have asked the leaders and staff to do two things to help the school be even better:

- make sure work is always just hard enough for everyone in the class
- improve your writing so that it is as good as your reading.

You can help by continuing to do your best and letting teachers know if you think tasks are too hard or too easy. I send my best wishes to all the adults in school and to each one of you.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Rosemary Eaton

Lead inspector

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