

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120134
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	339609
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Trevor Watts

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	275
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Thorpe
Headteacher	Mrs Carol Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 23 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and parents/carers. They observed the school's work and looked at many documents, records, policies and samples of pupils' work. 45 responses to the parent/carer questionnaire were received.

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

- the reasons behind pupils' differing standards in English, mathematics and science
- the initiatives that may have been put into place to improve the quality of teaching and learning in view of standards falling in 2009
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in monitoring teaching and determining appropriate interventions to raise standards.

Information about the school

This is a large school located in Victorian buildings on a restricted site close to Hinckley town centre. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals and very few are in the care of their local authority. Almost all pupils are White British and speak English as their home language.

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

Sound leadership by the headteacher has resulted in the solid maintenance of pupils' standards around the nationally expected level. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in their academic skills and make good progress in their personal development. They enjoy their work and behave well, have a clear sense of what is right and wrong, and learn many things about their own culture and those of other peoples and countries.

In their self-evaluation, school leaders have judged pupils' average attainment to be a good outcome for the school, despite their own evaluation of teaching being satisfactory. Because they have not critically analysed the lessons they have observed, leaders have not been able to pinpoint weaker elements that still exist in the teaching. There was a rise in standards in 2008. However, they dipped again in all tested subjects in 2009, although pupils' attainment in mathematics was higher than for English and science compared with the national average. This was largely because of the focused support that had been put in place already, and still continues. Teachers do not always translate their careful planning into really challenging activities for pupils of different abilities and ages within a class. Equally, their marking of pupils' work often does not guide pupils in what they need to do next in order to improve.

Leaders have chosen to develop the curriculum in creative and imaginative ways. This enthusiastic drive is having positive results in pupils' motivation and the development of their cross-subject skills. Similarly, much work to upgrade the care, guidance and support that pupils receive is helping many vulnerable and lower ability pupils to make better progress than previously.

The school's satisfactory capacity to improve is boosted by leaders' success in developing the curriculum, care procedures, support systems and the effective management of changes in staffing and teachers' roles. It is tempered by the lack of significant progress in raising pupils' attainments through the widespread improvement in some teaching skills and the slow spread of these skills from classes where good practice is seen. The school has identified teaching as an area for improvement, but the long term planning lacks precise targets for the development of teaching skills and how pupils' standards will be improved.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in the main subjects of English, science and mathematics by providing work that gives a greater level of challenge for different groups of pupils in lessons.

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- Develop more rigorous monitoring and analysis of teaching, and implement the findings in order to ensure that good aspects of teaching are more widely embedded in everyday practice throughout the school.
- Make sure that teachers' marking consistently tells pupils how well they are progressing towards their targets, and what they need to do to improve their work.
- 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**

Lessons observed during the inspection confirmed the picture of broadly average standards and most pupils making satisfactory progress in their learning. A strong sense of trust between pupils and their teachers leads to good attitudes towards learning. Pupils often work in groups or pairs, benefiting from positive interaction with their peers, but the actual activities in lessons are not always sufficiently challenging or well matched to meet their individual needs. Some teachers spend too long explaining the intricacies of the topic or too many details of the task. Pupils' attention thus declines; they lose enthusiasm and make limited progress. An English lesson, for instance, about reporting a news item started well with a staged scenario outdoors, but on return to the classroom, there were further instructions and explanations for 20 minutes before pupils were allowed to begin their report writing, and many pupils were inattentive and restless by then. Pupils receive good support to aid their progress if they need help because of their special educational needs and/or disabilities or, for example, because their understanding of English is very limited. However, lack of challenge means that more able pupils are not always reaching the standards they are capable of.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and understand the issues related to bullying in general and to various aspects of their own safety. They have a positive attitude to learning and behave well in classes and around the school. Although a few pupils can act less responsibly at times, they respond well to staff actions, and lessons are not disturbed. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They bring a balanced mix of fruits and other foods to lunch and are aware of dangers to their health such as drugs and smoking. They have good opportunities to enjoy physical activities, including swimming for all pupils, and sporting clubs such as netball and football. Pupils of all abilities and groups are fully involved in community activities and play a full part in the wider life of the school, such as through the school council, being reading partners or play partners, and helping in class. Fund-raising for local and other charities is a regular part of their contribution to the whole community. Pupils know how to apply their basic skills in, for instance, English and information and communication technology in other areas of learning. They develop their understanding about the world of work satisfactorily, and are punctual, attentive and cooperative. Pupils' attendance is average, and has improved slightly recently, despite recent setbacks such as an

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outbreak of swine 'flu.

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development owes much to the positive example set by staff and the encouraging ethos of the school. Pupils are willing to express their views and reflect on world-wide matters and the lives of others. They understand the impact of their actions on others and behave accordingly on most occasions. Pupils help each other and people outside the school. They say there is no bullying in school, although 'some can be silly sometimes'. They have a clear view of their town and its culture and have developing awareness of other countries through their studies, computer contact abroad, and fundraising and other support for children in other countries.

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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers are confident and display secure subject knowledge. They adopt a variety of strategies, including frequent and imaginative use of modern technology. However, the quality of teaching is too inconsistent. For example, when the teaching is securely based on assessments of individual pupils' progress, lessons are taught effectively and pupils

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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of all abilities learn well, but the use of such assessment information to promote learning is not sufficiently embedded in all classes. Feedback to students in lessons is generally well judged and sensitively communicated, helping to improve pupils' rate of learning significantly. Teaching assistants are particularly effective in giving such verbal support and explanations to pupils with particular needs. In some classes, effective marking tells pupils if they have met their targets and what they need to do to improve their work. This does not occur frequently enough, however.

The curriculum is broad and well balanced. Pupils enjoy the imaginative and creative themes and cross-curricular topics both at school and through homework. Recent topics about the Ancient Greeks and the Second World War do much to demonstrate how different subjects are inter-related, and allow pupils to develop their skills more widely. The range of extra-curricular opportunities and visits to places such as a sea life centre and a farm is good, although limited access to sports playing areas obliges the school to use other facilities nearby. Curriculum afternoons and evenings for parents are well attended and encourage a greater degree of understanding of academic needs within families.

Pupils rightly feel that they are well cared for and supported. They are confident that they could talk to staff about any problems. The school environment is welcoming and staff are proud of the quality and range of their provision to help all pupils develop into well-balanced young people. All individuals and groups of pupils are included fully in all aspects of the school's life. The school works well with external agencies to provide strong support for vulnerable students, a few poor attenders, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Transition arrangements for pupils entering the school, moving through the key stages and on to secondary school are well planned and organised and are effective in helping pupils to settle confidently in their new surroundings.

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?

Senior leaders have an ambitious hope for the future, and have communicated this well to staff. Senior staff have monitored relatively few lessons and have observed teaching generally. As a result some improvements have been made, but they are not sufficiently strategic and tend instead to be targeted at particular groups of pupils such as those with reading difficulties, or elements of learning such as mental arithmetic, or have only

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spread into a few classes, such as for the constructive marking of pupils' work.

Governors support the school soundly; they meet their statutory obligations and their help and management in financial and premises matters is good. However, they do not challenge the school sufficiently over how pupils' standards could be raised further.

Parents and carers are involved well in many school activities, from helping with reading and art classes to meetings about the curriculum and homework. Many are active in supporting and promoting the school's charity events and other activities that involve the community, including raising funds for in-school causes like new lockers in the classroom and stage equipment. The school has effective and supportive links with a range of other organisations that aid the development and learning of pupils such as those whose home language is not English, or some who may need personal counselling. Links with other schools are valuable in holding events for the more gifted and talented pupils, sporting activities, or a recent drama workshop, for instance.

Safeguarding procedures are fully up to date and meet requirements. Staff are properly trained in different aspects of child protection and health and safety. The procedures for pupils' care and support are closely adhered to and systematically recorded. Good access to all activities and aspects of the school is ensured through the school's determined policy that every individual or group of pupils should be enabled and supported appropriately. Whether it is for swimming, learning French, extra mathematics support or a friend in the playground, pupils feel that they are taking a full part in school life and are not discriminated against in any way. Through its positive planning the school has raised pupils' awareness of their local community, and the wider world. Pupils take part in many activities from supporting the Salvation Army and children in Chernobyl to leading a Remembrance Day service and organising carol concerts in the town centre.

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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3
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Early Years Foundation Stage

The Reception classes meet the needs of the youngest children soundly. Children enter the unit with skills and understanding that are broadly at the levels expected nationally for children their age, and make satisfactory progress in most areas of learning. Their progress is stronger in their social, personal and physical development. The teaching is satisfactory, although it does not always offer sufficient pace and challenge to all of the children. Staff enjoy warm relationships with the children and they teach a sound mix of activities. Some lessons are focused securely on a particular skill such as reading or learning about 'opposites'. Others are 'free flow', and involve more individual exploration in classroom activities or in the 'outdoor' space. This is a covered courtyard that is used daily, but its small size restricts how creatively it can be used. Staff know the children thoroughly and look after them with care. Children's progress is monitored and recorded satisfactorily, and lessons are prepared appropriately to encourage each child's learning. A member of the senior leadership team manages the Reception classes aptly, with day-to-day organisation managed by the dedicated staff team within the unit.

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

Although only a small minority of parents returned the questionnaire, the great majority of them were supportive of the school and what it does for their children. They comment, for example, that, 'I am extremely happy with the school,' and 'My daughter has made fantastic progress.' Many comments praised the staff's approachability and the benefits gained from good liaison between home and school. Only a very small minority of parents had any negative views about the school, concerning, for instance, helping their children to lead a healthy lifestyle, and management of behaviour. A very small number of parents commented on different health-related matters, and the inspection team has queried these. The school had already taken steps to resolve some matters, and is doing so with others. It has given assurances that it will keep parents informed about what is being done.

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 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 45 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 275 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	62	17	38	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	58	18	40	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	47	23	51	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	49	18	40	3	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	56	17	38	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	53	17	38	2	4	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	47	20	44	4	9	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)	20	44	21	47	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	40	24	53	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	33	21	47	4	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	42	16	36	4	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	49	18	40	2	4	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	62	14	31	2	4	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 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.



18 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Hinckley, LE10 1AW

I'm sure you will remember when a team of inspectors visited your school recently. Thank you for being so polite and for helping us, especially those of you who had a discussion with us about your work and the school.

We found that you go to a satisfactory school that is active and well-known in the community. There is a positive 'family' atmosphere within the school that shows how well you are growing and developing your personal skills. You make progress in your class work that is satisfactory and you reach standards that are about the same level as many other children of your age across the country. Your teachers and other adults in class know you well and give you a lot of help, care and support when it is needed. The school's leaders have done a lot to improve the different subjects and the way you are guided in your learning. The curriculum is good; it is often exciting and you enjoy many parts of it, especially when you are doing big projects in several different subjects at once. Many of you are very active in helping out in school, in the community and in helping children and older people much further away.

We are asking the school's leaders to look at how you are taught, and to think of new ways to make teaching even better. Teachers plan their lessons carefully, but we are asking them to make some of the activities harder so that you are all really stretched in your learning and you reach higher standards in the important subjects of English, mathematics and science. We have asked your teachers to add extra comments sometimes when marking your work, to tell you how well you are doing towards your targets, and what you need to do to improve your work.

With my best wishes

Trevor Watts

Lead inspector

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