

# St Mary's Voluntary Controlled Church of England Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121045
<b>Local Authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	339844
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 September –1 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Rob Isaac

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	219
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Massey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Linda Cullum
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	0 April 2007
<b>School address</b>	Swan Lane Long Stratton Norwich
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<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@st-marys.norfolk.sch.uk

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## **Introduction**

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, teachers' planning, the school improvement plan, monitoring and evaluation records, as well as a wide range of policies and administrative records, reports from the local authority, analyses of attainment in assessment records. The inspectors also analysed questionnaire returns from 154 pupils, 86 parents and 16 staff.

The inspection team evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- pupils' achievement in English, especially in writing
- the quality of teaching
- standards in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum
- the quality of monitoring and evaluation of the school's work.

## **Information about the school**

St Mary's Voluntary Controlled Church of England Junior School is of a broadly similar size to other schools of its type. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage and almost all transfer from the infant school and go on to the nearby secondary school on the same site. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities is well above average at 26 per cent. Almost six per cent of pupils have statements of special educational need and this is over three times the national average. The school has gained the 'School Active Sports Mark', the 'Norfolk Healthy School Award' and is recognised as an Eco-School. The school is currently without a deputy headteacher, although this role has been filled and will be taken up in January 2010. The after-school club held on the school premises is managed by the school's governing body.

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

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

St Mary's is a good school. Its pupils are at the heart of everything it does. They are cared for, guided and supported well in a nurturing environment which helps them to thrive. Safeguarding procedures are good. Many pupils, parents and carers are rightly proud of their school. Some comment that the school is 'a happy, supportive environment', and indicate how safe pupils feel and how they are very confident that staff will listen to them. Pupils whose circumstances render them vulnerable state unequivocally that adults are always there for them. They write that 'I like every lesson, my school helps me and the teachers are nice to me'. Behaviour throughout the school is good and pupils say the very few instances of bullying that occur are dealt with quickly and fairly. Pupils' understanding of keeping safe is good, as is their knowledge of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Many pupils take part enthusiastically in the extensive range of sporting activities available, recognising the importance of regular exercise and saying 'My school is healthy and teachers have nice smiley faces'.

Pupils love their school. Arrangements to help children when they first join the school are good and result in children who are happy and eager to learn. Throughout the school, both staff and pupils are enthusiastic and when this combines with good and occasionally outstanding teaching it results in consistently good learning and progress. Relationships are excellent and pupils spontaneously help each other with their work. However, younger pupils are not always supervised closely enough at the beginning or end of the school day.

Many pupils join the school with below average attainment yet by the end of Year 6, attainment is at least average in English, mathematics and science. Attainment in reading is above average but in writing, it has not been as high although it is steadily improving. Teachers consistently use assessment information to help plan the next steps in learning and their marking provides pupils with good advice about how to improve their work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of carefully tailored support.

Good self-evaluation procedures ensure that the leadership team are clearly aware of strengths and priorities for development although governors have not been involved enough. The staff use the school improvement plan well to identify the right priorities and this leads to a rigorous and effective programme of actions aimed at rectifying weaknesses. For example, weaknesses in writing, such as a limited vocabulary and lack of extended writing, have been accurately identified and are steadily being addressed. Although the school has done much to promote community cohesion through studies of world religions, there is scope to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity in the United Kingdom. The thoroughness of self-evaluation and the

strong determination of senior managers to drive the school forward demonstrate that there is good capacity to improve.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing by:
  - providing teachers with support in knowing exactly what to teach to ensure higher levels of attainment
  - ensuring that marking clearly identifies the positive features of pupils' writing and provides guidance about how to improve it further.
- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body's work by:
  - enabling more governors to support individual subjects and year groups through regular support of pupils and teachers.
- Improve the procedures at the beginning and end of the school each day by:
  - ensuring that children enter and leave the school under close supervision.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2
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Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 has been about average over the last three years. As a result of strategies, such as grouping pupils by ability and a focus on the teaching of reading and writing, pupils' attainment in reading and to a lesser extent, writing is rising. Boys' attainment has been much lower than that of girls but this gap has steadily been addressed and the attainment of boys is now much closer to that of girls. Pupils' current work shows that the majority are working at levels commensurate with their age. Learning and progress throughout the school are good. In reading, progress is very good and more able pupils are challenged well. In mathematics also, the more able are challenged suitably. However, in writing too few pupils attain the higher level because their vocabulary is limited and their writing is too brief.

Pupils are well-motivated and keen learners. The achievement and enjoyment of many are good as is their attendance. Pupils value their school and relish the chance to take on responsibilities such as school council members or eco-councillors. All pupils spoken to and the analyses of the questionnaire returns show that pupils take an active part in decision-making. They are very keen to improve their environment and they told inspectors how they work hard to keep it free from litter. Pupils are respectful and kind and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Throughout the school, there is a sense of enjoyment and interest in learning about the world. Pupils show good skills in numeracy and information and communications technology. Their strong personal skills ensure that they are prepared well for the future.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

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

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

## How effective is the provision?

During the inspection teaching was consistently good; a few lessons were outstanding. Features of the outstanding teaching included the very effective use of a range of different strategies to ensure the active involvement of all pupils throughout lessons. Probing questioning drew out key points in learning as staff checked pupils' knowledge carefully as well as their understanding of subject specific vocabulary. Teachers used interesting resources to inspire and engage pupils' interests. Pupils knew exactly what was expected of them and what to do to succeed through a precise sharing of the learning objectives.

In all lessons, praise is used effectively to encourage pupils to feel safe when answering questions, building up their self-esteem and encouraging their good behaviour.

Information about what pupils know already is used carefully by teachers to plan the next steps of learning in most subjects. Observations of lessons and the analysis of pupils' work show that assessment information is used effectively so that teachers are specific in their planning about the learning expected for the range of ability within the class. In some writing lessons, the activities planned are very relevant for the more able pupils. There are also examples of very informative marking and feedback to pupils about the quality of their writing, with comments clearly outlining how to improve.

The curriculum is broad and meets the needs of most pupils. It is especially well adapted for the needs of the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils comment that the things they learn about are very interesting and 'no two days are the same'. Extra-curricular activities are varied, and the excellent links with other local schools means an extensive range of sporting activities are available. Pupils

thoroughly enjoy these opportunities and the take-up rate is good.

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils needing additional help are supported very well and benefit from effective strategies to meet their specific needs. Withdrawal groups are particularly effective in supporting pupils with emotional or social difficulties. Strong links with outside agencies ensure the school is able to offer sufficient support at the right time.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have a very clear vision for how the school should develop and this is shared by staff at all levels of responsibility and experience. Morale is high as confirmed by the overwhelmingly positive responses from the questionnaires.

Pupils and staff praise the school and commented on the 'approachable teachers', 'great team spirit', a 'love of learning' and of 'feeling valued'.

Monitoring and evaluation including tracking of pupils' progress and the setting of targets is rigorous. Consequently, the leadership has embedded a culture of striving for improvement. A priority is to involve parents and carers more in their children's learning although this is underdeveloped currently. Strategies such as inviting parents to contribute to school self-evaluation, involving them in parent workshops and the effective work of the parent support mentor have led to positive relationships with parents. Equality of opportunity is promoted outstandingly well, and the staff work hard to foster the progress, both personal and academic, of each individual pupil in their care. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good especially at school and local community level. The excellent partnership with other local schools has resulted in pupils' good understanding of healthy lifestyles. However, as the school improvement plan identifies, pupils' awareness of different communities within the United Kingdom is limited. Governors have not been sufficiently involved in school life but are keen to develop their roles. They fulfill their statutory duty to promote safeguarding well. The school monitors its spending carefully to benefit all pupils and provides good value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were positive about the school's work and the efforts of the staff. They are especially pleased with the safeguarding arrangements, the quality of teaching and the progress their children make. Comments included satisfaction with children's progress such as, 'My child has settled in well and quickly. She likes the school, is happy and is getting the right level of support.' A few responses indicated that procedures at the beginning and the end of the school day could be tightened up to ensure safe oversight of pupils. Inspectors found evidence to support this view.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's Voluntary Controlled Church of England Junior 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 86 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 219 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	51	37	43	5	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	31	49	57	6	7	3	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	20	47	55	10	12	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	16	50	58	10	12	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	23	51	59	6	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	21	47	55	12	14	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	34	48	56	7	8	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)	18	21	44	51	10	12	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	20	46	53	12	14	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	15	48	56	15	17	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	12	44	51	14	16	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	14	16	48	56	7	8	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	28	51	59	5	6	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



9 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's C of E VC Junior School, Long Stratton NR15 2UY

Thank you for the way you made us feel welcome when we visited you at your school. St Mary's Junior is a good school where you enjoy learning and your parents are pleased you are able to go there. Here are some of the highlights we found:

You work hard and make good progress in lessons. Many of you do particularly well in reading. Well done! You behave well and know how to take care of yourselves and eat healthily and do lots of exercise.

Your teachers teach you well and plan lots of interesting things for you to do and provide you with many different experiences.

You look after your environment well and your headteacher has introduced many good ideas to make the school better. She is helped by the other teachers and the governors, who are all keen to work as a team.

Your headteacher, staff and governors are determined to make your school even better. We have suggested they do three things:

Help you improve your writing so that you make faster progress in English.

Enable governors to support you and the staff more.

Improve procedures when you arrive at and leave the school each day.

Thank you again for your kindness and your contribution to the inspection.

Yours faithfully

Rob Isaac

Lead Inspector

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