

St Mary's CofE (C) First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124284
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	340532
Inspection dates	29–30 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Georgina Beasley

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Timson
Headteacher	Sue Wesley
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eight lessons were observed and three teachers seen. Inspectors met with parents, groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at teachers' planning, the school's assessment and tracking information, individual education plans, pupils' work and important policy documents. Twenty six questionnaires from parents and carers were received and analysed.

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

- the progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and by boys in writing
- pupils' contribution to the community and its impact on their academic and personal achievement
- how well the school monitors the success of initiatives against pupils' progress and outcomes from Reception to the end of Year 4.

Information about the school

All pupils who attend this small village school are from White British backgrounds. Fewer pupils than usual have special educational needs and/or disabilities although the number in the small year groups varies. Most needs are for moderate learning or speech and language difficulties. Children start in the Reception class in the September following their fourth birthday. The school has Healthy Schools status and Artsmark accreditation. It is part of a 'community and learning' partnership.

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

St Marys is a good school and most pupils are happy to be there. Pupils make good progress and reach above average levels by the end of Year 4 in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Teaching and the curriculum are good. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities, including a variety of visits and visitors, and interesting and relevant learning, ensures pupils enjoy school. Attendance is above average and punctuality is good. Pupils feel safe and make healthy life choices. They make a good contribution to the school and village community. They are keen to join in with a varied range of school and village events and are regular visitors to the church. Pupils' good key skills prepare them well for future learning.

The school has high expectations for pupils. It has implemented a number of effective strategies for raising their achievement since the previous inspection, reflecting its good capacity to improve. Higher achieving pupils receive good levels of challenge to think through and solve problems independently and to apply knowledge to new learning. As a result, most exceed expected levels. Effective interventions enable nearly all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to reach expected levels by the end of Year 4. As one pupil said, 'Now I am getting better at reading and learning very well.'

As a result of support from the local authority, there have been some recent improvements to learning and development for children in the Reception class. Progress for these children is satisfactory overall, but good when they learn in small groups on specific tasks matched to their needs. There are still not enough planned opportunities for the children to choose to learn indoors or outside and to work on self-directed tasks with one another.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's care for the well-being of pupils and staff permeates the school's work. Action plans detail precisely who will do what and when to bring about the planned improvements. The success is sometimes measured against whether the actions are complete rather than the impact they have had on pupils' progress and learning. As a result, teachers do not always adjust teaching methods quickly enough to match the learning needs of every pupil. Parents' and carers' involvement is satisfactory. The school does not provide them with the opportunity to contribute enough to their children's assessments in the Reception class or in all of the reviews of progress if their children have a particular learning need.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Give the children in the Reception Year frequent timetabled opportunities to learn in small focused groups and to choose whether to learn indoors or outside.

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- Involve parents of Reception children and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in the regular assessment of their children's learning and progress.
- Ensure staff and governors measure the success of teaching methods and improvement strategies against pupil outcomes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils enjoy learning because topics are interesting. Learning and progress in lessons are good. Pupils are clear about what they are learning and why and so are able to check their own work and to make improvements independently. Higher achieving pupils make good progress and exceed expected levels. Boys and girls do equally well. Boys' achievement in writing has improved this year. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in Years 3 and 4 and most reach expected levels. Progress for this group of pupils is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 but improving.

Assessment information from Reception is now available to help teachers plan well-matched learning for these pupils as soon as they start in Year 1. For example, in one lesson observed pupils made good progress because they worked in small groups on different focused tasks. By the end of the lesson, one group understood the value of coins to twenty pence, another learned to double amounts up to fifty pence while a third group learned to use coins to halve amounts of money.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe and are confident to ask an adult for help if needed. Behaviour is good and pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance and punctuality. Pupils have good social, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills which give them a strong basis for learning in later life. Pupils are active at playtimes and enjoy the numerous physical education activities. Nearly every pupil attends at least one extra-curricular club or activity. Particularly impressive is the number of boys who take part in the street dance club, which is due to perform at this year's village carnival. The gardening club and healthy menus promote pupils' good understanding of how to lead healthy lives. The school council gives pupils a good opportunity to express their views. Its work has resulted in some improvements to the school environment, and to the increased range of school clubs and visits.

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	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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers assess pupils' work carefully and use the information to plan learning that largely matches the ability range of learners in each class. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn and share this so that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Some teachers use questions skilfully to check pupils' understanding and extend their learning. Direct questions help pupils learn a particular method, for example, to solve problems in mathematics or remember the correct spellings and punctuation when writing which, if understood, helps them make good progress. Teachers do not always check that the method being taught is understood by all of the children and so adjust their teaching. Learning and progress are satisfactory at these times.

The curriculum is interesting because it links learning in many different subjects. Science, ICT and art are particular favourites because learning activities are practical. Visits to museums and the current World Cup topic are memorable and promote pupils' successful learning in history and geography. Drama helps pupils to think of and express ideas and so motivates writing. Sporting links with local schools are strong. The 'virtual sports day' encourages pupils to compete against themselves and the times of pupils in other schools. Workshops for gifted and talented pupils in science, mathematics and ICT support their good achievement.

Good care for pupils' personal welfare ensures pupils feel safe. Interventions to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are effective. Parents attend annual reviews of their children's progress, but are not all involved enough in ongoing reviews to enable them to support their children effectively at home. The family support

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worker visits the school regularly to talk to parents and offer advice and support for a range of concerns. Good links with the on-site nursery and with the middle school ensure a smooth transition to Reception and Year 5.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher gives the school clear direction. The staff work as one team and are all involved in evaluating the school's successes and in planning and delivering the different strategies and interventions aimed at improving pupils' achievement. They predict likely levels of attainment at the end of Years 2 and 4 and track progress towards these targets in all year groups. The monitoring of improvement strategies and the quality of teaching focuses too much on tasks completed rather than on how much pupils have learned. As a result, teachers do not always identify quickly enough whether the teaching methods used support every pupil's way of learning.

The governing body ensures that the school follows agreed policies and procedures. Safeguarding arrangements are robust. The school constantly reviews procedures to ensure consistency in practice and to integrate safety into the curriculum. Training is comprehensive. Governors have a clear picture of what the school does well and what still needs to be improved through regular meetings and discussions with the school staff. It checks to ensure agreed actions have been implemented, but does not always measure the effectiveness of improvements against pupils' achievements. The school promotes equal opportunities well through good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities overall and equal access to the excellent range of extra-curricular activities. Positive partnerships with village community groups and local schools enrich the pupils' personal and academic experiences. The school has successfully raised pupils' awareness of and respect for the diversity of different communities in the United Kingdom through links with a large school in Wolverhampton and learning about different cultural celebrations through curriculum topics. Suitable opportunities exist to promote the diversity of the global community through money-raising events for charity and learning about different countries.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
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
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The children start in the Reception class with attainment that is broadly in line with expectations for their age in all areas of learning. They make satisfactory progress to reach expected levels by the end of the Reception Year. Children know how to keep themselves and each other safe and know the importance of leading healthy lives. They help with tidying up and when given the opportunity make informed choices about their learning. Until recently, there has been too little opportunity for the children to learn outdoors or to choose what they will learn, when and with whom. When the opportunity is given, the children are inquisitive and curious learners. During the inspection, a small group of boys and girls enjoyed making adjustments to their boats until they successfully got them to float.

Teaching, leadership and management are satisfactory. Recent improvements are ensuring a relevant curriculum and learning opportunities. When the children learn as a whole class on activities that are led by the teacher, learning is only satisfactory. At these times, children with a specific learning need do not receive the support they need to make good progress, and those who can already complete the task are not given sufficient challenge. Children make good progress when they learn in groups on specific tasks matched to their abilities while other children in the class develop their own learning at their own pace. There are satisfactory arrangements for assessing learning and progress, although parents are not sufficiently involved in this process. Personal development, speaking, literacy and numeracy are assessed more regularly than other areas of learning. This makes it difficult to check for any gaps in learning in all required aspects. Safeguarding arrangements are good and, although not formally logged, safety checks are made every morning.

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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

Parents and carers who returned questionnaires and those who spoke to inspectors are generally pleased with the school. Inspectors agree that pupils enjoy school, feel safe and know how to lead healthy lives. A number of parents expressed concerns about the amount of information they receive about their children's progress and feel that the school does not involve them enough in their children's learning. The 'community and learning' partnership provides opportunities for parents to get involved in some school events. Opportunities to meet the teacher to discuss children's progress have improved this year and one parent confirmed that their child's teacher is 'always available' if they need to speak with her. Those who raised concerns were mostly parents of younger pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. While these pupils' needs are being met effectively, inspectors agree that parents of pupils who are falling behind are not involved enough in discussing their child's learning and progress and in deciding the best ways to give them support both in school and at home.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's CofE (C) First 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 26 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 64 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	73	6	23	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	62	8	31	1	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	10	38	12	46	4	15	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	38	11	42	3	12	2	8
The teaching is good at this school	12	46	10	38	3	12	1	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	38	9	35	6	23	1	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	46	12	46	1	4	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	69	4	15	2	8	1	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	54	6	23	3	12	2	8
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	27	16	62	3	12	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	31	10	38	4	15	2	8
The school is led and managed effectively	13	50	7	27	2	8	3	12
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	46	10	38	2	8	1	4

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



1 July 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of St Mary's CofE (C) First School, Stafford, ST19 9PQ

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome when we visited your school recently. Thank you especially to those of you who told us so much about your learning. It is clear from our discussions that you enjoy school. Your parents said so too. Most of you come to school every day and arrive on time. Many of you know how well you are learning and what you need to do to improve. Well done.

St Mary's is a good school. You make good progress because the curriculum is interesting and teaching is good. You all said you felt safe in school and that you keep fit and healthy. The school council is doing a good job and has helped to increase the range of clubs and visits, which is now excellent. It is good to see so many of you taking part in them and in village events. You certainly get along well and your behaviour is good. You listen to your teachers in lessons which is helping everyone to learn.

We have asked your school to improve three things:

- to give children in the Reception class more opportunity to choose what to learn, where and with whom
- to involve parents and carers of Reception children and those whose children need occasional help with learning in reviewing your progress
- to check more closely that the improvements it is making are helping you to learn and if not to make further changes.

The youngest children can help by always being sensible when you have the chance to choose what and where to learn, especially when you choose to learn outside. You can all help by telling your teacher if you do not understand something so that they can change the way they are teaching it.

Thank you again for the welcome

Yours sincerely

Georgina Beasley

Lead inspector

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