

# St Mary's Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124335
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	340544
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 September 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alan Dobbins

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	54
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Grewer
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Lovern
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Bellamour Way Colton Rugeley
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at data the school has on pupils' progress. They scrutinised 30 parental questionnaires and spoke with seven parents.

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work. They looked in detail at the following:

- how well pupils are doing in their learning
- what the school is doing to improve standards in writing
- the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the effectiveness of leaders in raising pupil achievement and in improving the overall quality of the provision.

## Information about the school

St Mary's is a small primary school that serves a rural community around the village of Colton but is increasingly attracting pupils from the nearby town of Rugeley. Pupil numbers have risen since the last inspection. Almost all the pupils are from a White British heritage and many are from advantaged homes. Proportionately, there are more pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities than is typically found in other primary schools. In September 2007, the leaders and leadership structure changed. Leadership is made up of an executive headteacher with responsibility for St Mary's and another local primary school six miles away, and an onsite deputy headteacher. St Mary's staff and governors link closely with staff of the other school in the joint planning of policies and procedures that are aimed at raising standards. Governors of both schools share responsibilities for each school. Although both schools remain independent of each other, the local authority refers to the arrangement as a 'federation'.

**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**

**1**

### Main findings

St Mary's is a good and improving school. The leadership team has been very effective in driving up the quality of teaching and learning, so much so, that last year's leavers attained the school's highest ever levels in reading, mathematics and science. In each, test results were well above the national average, as well as exceeding the expectations for pupils in similar small schools. Better attainment is also seen for pupils at the end of Year 2, who also gained higher levels than hitherto. Attainment in writing has not improved as much, being broadly satisfactory throughout the school.

The substantial upward shift in pupils' attainment has been gained without changing the fundamental strength of the school, much appreciated by parents and pupils, which is its 'family' ethos. In the school, everyone is respected as an equal. All pupils are nurtured, encouraged and supported sufficiently well to become well-rounded young people who are very well prepared for the challenge of secondary education. It is no surprise that pupils attend more regularly than is the national average. The school is a safe and happy place. Pupils enjoy being there and they and their parents are quick to affirm this. The very strong relationships between staff and pupils, and the school's visible Christian focus, help pupils learn what is right and wrong. They also learn how to deal with difficult choices, including those to do with staying safe and keeping healthy. By fully accepting their role as learners, the pupils are making a significant contribution to the improving standards in the subjects. In lessons, their very good attitudes to their work are clearly shown by their outstanding behaviour, the effort they always make to do their best and the joy they show when they celebrate their successes and those of their friends.

Pupils are learning what is right for them. Even so the curriculum is changing to better prepare them for the next stage of their education. As this development progresses, they will have more chances to be active in their learning and, by so doing, greater opportunity to gain the skills of independent learning they will need for success in their next school.

The governors and the leadership team know the school very well. They have identified the need to focus on improving pupils' writing skills by developing a more consistent approach to planning. They also recognise the need to provide specific advice and support to improve the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Their plans for further improvement are precise and based on good assessment information. This, allied to the substantial impact already achieved by leaders in raising individual achievement in reading, mathematics and science across the school, shows the capacity for further improvement to be outstanding. Governors are rightly pleased that their decision to join with another school as a 'federation' is proving to be such a potent force

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for improvement.

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

- Raise standards in writing across the school so that they are above the national average and match those in reading, mathematics and science by ensuring greater consistency in planning challenging writing activities.
  - Improve the quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by providing specific support and advice so that by the end of their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage children are achieving better standards.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enter Year 1 with standards about those expected for their age. Past data show that up to last year they left school at the end of Year 6 with standards that broadly met the national levels expected for them. This meant that over their years at school they made satisfactory progress in their learning. It is better now because there has been a sharp upward jump in the performance of last year's leavers. They realised good progress in reading, mathematics and science because of sustained improvements in teaching and support during the past two years. In reading, mathematics and science many more pupils attained higher levels than previously and they made good progress over their time at school. In writing, improved performance was not recognised and pupils continued to make satisfactory progress, with results staying in line with the national average. The substantial improvement in reading, mathematics and science, persuasively shown by the results of the Year 6 leavers, is replicated lower down the school. This good progress is easily recognised in lessons, which are planned well to make sure that each pupil is learning at a challenging level. The pupils themselves contribute to their good progress. They have outstanding attitudes to their work. Routinely, they show, by the outstanding way they behave and by always trying hard to do their best work, that they have fully accepted the routines and expectations for learning. Consequently, many lessons are rightly enjoyed by the pupils, their teachers, teaching assistants and volunteers. Inspection evidence shows that teaching for pupils at all levels of attainment is equally effective. Now all pupils are being fully challenged and this is a major contributory reason for the improvement in standards.

In a very safe 'family' environment, pupils develop their personal and social skills well. The school's close and visible links with the Christian faith provide outstanding guidance in helping pupils learn about, for example tolerance and acceptance as elements important in living and learning together. The thoughtful and caring way in which they support each other in lessons and throughout the day, and the almost total absence of any insensitive behaviour, reflect the genuine respect and friendship they have for each other. They know about looking after themselves and many take part in the sporting clubs after school, including netball, football, cricket and athletics. They know why they should eat healthily, even if sometimes they do not make the best choices. They take responsibility well when it is their turn to help in the school's day-to-day routines, such

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as emptying the re-cycling bins and stacking the dining room chairs after lunch and when they are appointed as prefects or buddies. They gain considerably in their learning and in their personal and social development from the many links with the local community, for example, when they sing carols at Christmas to the local Friendship Group and when helping prepare, with the village History Society, the time capsule they will bury in the churchyard. They also gain from being with, and talking to, the many people from the village and around who act as volunteers when they help with classroom learning and run the gardening club.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</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>2</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?**

Pupils improved progress is in part the result of teachers and teaching assistants successfully meeting their wide range of learning needs in the mixed-year classes. Teachers accurately record the progress of each pupil and use this information well in helping plan lessons that are made up of tasks that are relevant to each one. This means that in most lessons new learning is based solidly on prior knowledge and skills. Lessons begin with the presentation of clear learning objectives and the criteria against

<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.

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which pupils can judge whether they have achieved the objectives or not. They like this because they know what they have to do in the lessons. They also have their own targets for learning and they like these too, as they provide good guidance on what is required to get to the next level of learning. Teachers work well with their assistants and are beginning to make better use of the volunteers who are often in lessons. They use the interactive white boards well to stimulate learning through the use of sound, colour and movement and, when required, use specialist approaches, such as multi-sensory teaching and microphones to meet the specific needs of individual pupils. Marking is good and helpful in supporting learning and the regular homework projects, 'What Makes the Weather Angry' being a recent one, give pupils opportunities to work with their parents and carers in finding out for themselves.

The curriculum is changing to provide more opportunities for pupils to be active in their learning and the effect of this is seen in their improved progress. The use of staff from the other school, with expertise in some subjects not available to the same extent at St Mary's, is very helpful in planning and presenting the changing curriculum. Attention to detail characterises the planning and this is helping pupils see the curriculum as a cohesive package. For example, basic skills are taught through all subjects, cross-curricular links are planned so that learning in one subject supports learning in the others and the use of information and computer technology is embedded in all subjects. Pupils gain socially, and in their learning, by taking part in the good range of after school clubs and by the regular opportunities they have to go away to places, such as Borth and to Standon Bowers to experience a range of outdoor activities.

Pupils are outstandingly well looked after. The small number of pupils and generous staffing means that they are very well known to staff who are always on hand to help them when they are having difficulties with their learning or are troubled. The 'family' ethos clearly visible to any visitor to the school is based on the very strong relationships pupils have with staff and with each other. Parents are welcomed to take a full part in this 'family' and many do, to the advantage of their children. Through weekly newsletters, the termly parents' evenings, the written reports and the open door policy, parents have every opportunity to recognise how well their children are doing and to link with the school in helping them develop as learners and young people. The good assessment information the school holds on its pupils helps them move smoothly through the school. Transition arrangements to the secondary school are good and ensure the passage from primary to secondary education is smooth. Pupils who are vulnerable or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with all the specialist help they need to allow them to take a full part in all that the school offers.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<p><b>The quality of teaching</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p>
<p>Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p>2</p>

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<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>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Using the combined expertise of the staff of two schools is providing powerful support to governors as they seek to develop their school. This structure for leadership and management is working very effectively in raising standards, while at the same time protecting the 'family' ethos of the school that is so valued by parents and pupils alike. The senior leadership team and governors are highly successful in driving improvement to meet their challenging targets for all pupils. They rigorously monitor all aspects, especially teaching and learning, and carry out a thorough analysis of outcomes to develop exceptionally well-focused plans. Expectations for learning are high and staff morale is also high. Both are helping governors and leaders realise their ambitious vision for the school.

Much of the work completed during the first years of the new leadership arrangement, for example, the close monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and the redevelopment of the curriculum, is already showing good results. This is reflected in the significantly higher standards and the much better achievement of all the pupils, but especially the higher attaining ones. Safeguarding procedures meet all requirements. There is no evidence of discrimination of any sort. The links with the local and wider community are well thought through and provide benefits for pupils and the school alike. The school is a central element of village life. The sizeable body of volunteers, who play a significant role in extending pupils' learning experiences, is one result of the strong link between the school and the local community.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</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>



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<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Over the last two years much change has occurred in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children, generally, started the Early Years Foundation Stage with the skills and knowledge expected of them for their age and, typically, made satisfactory progress over each of the areas of early learning in their journey toward Year 1. Now that leadership and staffing are more stable, children are on course to be better prepared for their work in Year 1 than was previously the case. However, this is still satisfactory because the impact of this is not fully reflected.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is a happy place in which children settle quickly and well. Parents are thrilled with this and say that their children are enjoying their school. Record keeping is detailed and already is reflecting the good experiences children are having as they make friends, establish their relationships with the teacher and assistants and learn new things. The Early Years Foundation Stage area is well resourced for each of the areas of learning. However, the outdoor area does not enable children to gain full benefit over a sufficiently wide range of learning activities. Satisfactory leadership ensures that planning for improving the Early Years Foundation Stage includes providing specific support and advice. This is helping to raise the achievement of the children to match that of pupils in the rest of the school.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
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

Almost all the parents who completed the questionnaire, and most who spoke with an inspector, were effusive in their praise of the school and for the changes brought about by the new leaders who, they say are changing the school for the better. Parents are especially pleased with the good quality of the teaching and the good progress their children are making; that their children feel safe at school and enjoy being there; the behaviour of their children while at school; and many are pleased at the way the school is working with them so that they can help their children with their learning when they are at home. Two parents spoke with an inspector about incidents, which caused them to be concerned about the way their children were being cared for. This inspection

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found insufficient evidence to endorse these concerns.

## 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 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 inspector received 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 52 pupils registered at the school full-time and 2 part-time.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	81	5	16	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	61	10	32	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	58	10	32	2	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	55	12	39	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	55	13	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	55	12	39	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	68	7	23	2	6	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)	17	55	12	39	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	61	10	32	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	48	13	42	1	3	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	58	10	32	2	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	24	77	5	16	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	74	6	19	1	3	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"> <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.**



30 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England School, Colton, WS15 3LN

It was lovely for my colleague and I to meet and talk with you when we visited your school. Thank you for making us feel so welcome. We found many good things at St Mary's and we especially liked:

how well you are doing in your learning, except for writing, which we know you can improve

how well you behave in school and how hard you work in your lessons

that you feel safe and happy at school because you like your teachers and the other adults at school, and they like you also

that you know who to go to if something is troubling you

the way in which your headteacher is making the school a place in which you can really show how good you are at learning.

There are only two things I have asked should be made better. I am certain that you can do better at writing and I would also like the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to be as successful in their learning as older pupils are in theirs.

Thank you again for being so welcoming and I will always have pleasant memories of my time with you.

Yours faithfully

Alan Dobbins

Lead inspector

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