

# St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124342
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	340547
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 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>	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>	29
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Angela Pyatt
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Judith Udale
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Mucklestone Market Drayton Staffordshire
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eight lessons were observed, including two involving shared observations by the headteacher and an inspector. Inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, teachers' planning, the school development plan, monitoring and evaluation records, a range of policies and administrative records, reports from the local authority, analyses of attainment in end-of-key-stage assessments, assessment records and questionnaire returns from 17 pupils, 14 parents and seven staff.

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

- is achievement at least satisfactory in writing?
- what is the level of challenge provided for pupils?
- what is the quality of marking, target setting and peer evaluation?
- to what degree do pupils know what is expected of them?
- how rigorous is the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' achievements?
- how effectively do subject coordinators check on the overall provision in their subjects?

## Information about the school

The school is much smaller than most primary schools. All pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are no pupils currently eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, and there are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school enjoys dyslexia-friendly status, is a member of the Madeley Community and Learning Partnership, has received the Eco-Schools Bronze Award and liaises with the Shropshire Horticultural Society.

There has been much turbulence in staffing and the school has been led by five different headteachers in the last five years. At the time of the inspection, the substantive headteacher was absent on sick leave and the school was led by a seconded, acting headteacher, in post from September 2009, who had taken over from a previous seconded headteacher, in post from February to July 2009. There are two classes, one containing pupils from Reception to Year 2 and another for pupils from Year 3 to Year 6.

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

## Inspection judgements

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

**3**

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

**3**

## Main findings

St Mary's, pupils are cared for, guided and supported well in an environment which helps them to make great strides in their personal development. Safeguarding procedures are good. Many pupils, parents and carers are proud of their school and value its small size. Some comment that the school is 'set in a lovely environment', and indicate how safe pupils feel and how they are confident that staff will listen to them. Pupils whose circumstances render them vulnerable state that adults are always there for them. One wrote that 'it's really fun and I love coming to school'. The behaviour of most pupils is good and they 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 awareness of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Many pupils take part enthusiastically in a range of sporting activities, recognising the importance of regular exercise and saying things like, 'My school helps me get ready for high school,' and 'I enjoy coming to school on the "walking bus".' Relationships are often good and pupils spontaneously help each other with their work.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, planning and teaching do not take sufficient account of children's ages and needs and are focused more sharply on meeting the needs of pupils in Year 1 and Year 2. At the time of the inspection there were three children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and they are cared for well in an environment which is conducive to learning. The accommodation and resources provided are all of good quality, indoors and outdoors. As a result of these factors and the positive influence of their older classmates, their personal development is good and the overall progress of the children is currently satisfactory.

Attainment in reading is about average; in writing it has not been as high as it should be, although it is now steadily improving. Teaching is generally satisfactory although a minority of lessons have good features, including well-structured and well-timed activities. Shortcomings usually involve a lack of sharpness in lesson objectives. Teachers increasingly use assessment information to help plan the next steps in learning and their marking usually provides pupils with advice about how to improve their work. The acting headteacher, in post from the beginning of September 2009, brings suitable experience and a clear vision for how the school should develop, and this is shared by staff. Morale is good and pupils, parents and staff praise the school's inclusive nature. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and standards across different subjects have been fragile but are now being set in place with rigour by the acting headteacher and her colleagues.

Satisfactory self-evaluation procedures ensure that the leadership team is aware of the

school's strengths and priorities for development and governors are increasingly involved. The school has done much to promote community cohesion. The strong determination of senior managers to drive the school forward and the improvements made, despite the turbulence in leadership, demonstrate that there is a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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

- Ensure that the achievement of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is well supported by:
  - the strengthening of the curriculum so that every lesson is carefully planned to meet their learning needs
- Develop the quality of teaching and assessment by:
  - increasing the regular monitoring, evaluation and action planning of teaching by the headteacher and subject leaders
  - clarifying and sharing lesson aims and objectives
  - further developing assessment and self-evaluation strategies.
- Raise standards in all subjects by:
  - ensuring that subject leaders take greater responsibility for developing and monitoring provision and outcomes in their subjects
  - enabling governors to check more rigorously that school improvement actions have the intended impact.
- 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**

<b>3</b>
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Observations of lessons confirmed that pupils' learning and progress are satisfactory, though better in Years 1 to 6 than in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils' current work shows that the majority are working at levels commensurate with their age. In reading, progress is good and more able pupils are challenged well. In mathematics, the more able are challenged suitably. However, in writing too few pupils attain the higher level because their vocabulary is too limited and their writing too brief. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported satisfactorily in lessons and withdrawal groups by teaching assistants, resulting in sound learning and progress.

Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 has been broadly average over the last three years, although the very small size of each year group means that analyses of results are not statistically valid. As a result of strategies such as grouping pupils by age and 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 is steadily being addressed.

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

Pupils are well-motivated and keen learners. The achievement and enjoyment of many are good, as is their attendance. They value their school and relish the chance to take on responsibilities such as being school council members. The 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. They enjoy the strong links with the neighbouring St Mary's Church and visit it often. Throughout the school, there is a sense of enjoyment and interest in learning about the world. Pupils show sound key skills in areas such as numeracy and information and communication technology, and their good personal skills ensure that they are prepared well socially for later life.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<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 the teaching was broadly satisfactory; a few lessons were good. Features of the good teaching included the effective use of a range of strategies to

<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.

ensure the involvement of 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 such as interactive whiteboards to engage pupils' interests. Pupils usually knew what was expected of them through a sharing of the learning objectives. Teachers used praise effectively to encourage pupils to feel safe when answering questions, building up their self-esteem and encouraging their good behaviour.

Assessment is satisfactory but is not detailed enough in setting targets for pupils to aim for. Information about what pupils already know is used 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 satisfactorily to plan the learning expected for the range of ability within the class. There are also examples of informative marking and feedback to pupils about the quality of their writing, with comments outlining how to improve. That said, teachers are rightly seeking to implement new strategies for assessment this term.

The curriculum is broad and meets the needs of most pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. It is adapted well for the few pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, but this is not the case for the youngest children. Pupils comment that the things they learn about are interesting and say that 'it is good but it could be better'. Inspection evidence supported this view. Extra-curricular activities are varied, and the good links with other local schools and organisations mean that an extensive range of sporting activities are available. Pupils enjoy these opportunities and the take-up rate is good.

Pupils who need additional help benefit from effective strategies to meet their needs. Teaching assistants are effective in supporting pupils with emotional or social difficulties. Strong links with outside specialists in addressing problems such as dyslexia ensure the school offers sufficient support at the right time.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How effective are leadership and management?**

The acting headteacher has a clear vision for how the school should develop and this is shared by staff at all levels. Morale is good as confirmed by the positive responses from the questionnaires. Pupils, parents and staff praise the school's inclusive nature and comment on the 'approachable teachers', 'the safe, caring base', the 'lovely environment' and 'how children flourish'.

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

Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and standards in the range of subjects has been fragile but is now being set in place with more rigour by the acting headteacher and her colleagues. Consequently, the leadership is embedding a culture of improvement which staff have signed up to. A priority is rightly to raise standards in English and mathematics. Subject leaders have not been sufficiently involved in either monitoring of teaching and standards in their subjects or in self-evaluation.

Satisfactory self-evaluation procedures ensure that the leadership team is aware of strengths and priorities for development. Governors, however, have not been directly involved enough in school life or in bringing it to account for its performance last year but are now developing their roles. They fulfil their statutory duty to promote safeguarding well.

The school benefits from a strong partnership with parents and a friends' association. This has greatly improved the school grounds with play equipment, landscape design, adventure playground furniture and allotments for gardening that are well laid out and extensively used. Equality of opportunity is promoted well, and the staff work hard to foster the progress of each pupil in their care. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good, especially at local level. Good partnerships with other organisations have resulted in pupils' good understanding of healthy lifestyles. The school monitors its spending carefully but unit costs in such a small school are high.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<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>2</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>3</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>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in Reception with skills and understanding that are broadly at the levels



expected for their age. Induction is sound and although children had only been in school for a month at the time of the inspection, they were already happy and eager to learn. Because they are integrated into a class of older pupils they benefit from learning with older role-models, and this helps to ensure that they make satisfactory progress across most areas of learning in spite of teaching and planning not taking sufficient account of their needs. Although there is some balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by the children, there are times when children in the Reception Year are asked to sit listening for too long, resulting in a loss of concentration.

Children know that good behaviour is important. They follow routines and respond well to instructions, as seen when children tidied away their paint aprons and swept up the sand. Teachers and support staff display some good teamwork. The substantive headteacher, who was the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, had modelled the accommodation well last year to better cater for this age group and resources are now of good quality.

The outdoor area is immediately accessible from the classroom and facilitates opportunities for good educational play. The current Early Years Foundation Stage leader has a sound understanding of strengths and development areas and knows that although indoor and outdoor accommodation and resources are good, the lack of a specific planned curriculum for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage needs to be addressed. Insufficient time for adults to develop the curriculum in mixed-age classes is an impediment to progress.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

## 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 were pleased with the safeguarding arrangements, the quality of teaching and the way their children flourish. Comments included satisfaction with children's progress and referred to, for example, 'my daughter's happiness and willingness to come to school'. One expressed confidence that 'my child's voice is heard in a safe, caring school'.

Parents also raised some concerns, for example about provision for children with different levels of ability. Some commented that the school has been through difficult times with the absence of the substantive headteacher on sick leave but that things are

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

improving this term through the influence of the seconded headteacher and the relative continuity in staffing. Inspectors found evidence to support all these views.

## 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 Voluntary Aided 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 14 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 29 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	71	4	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	9	64	5	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	5	36	8	57	1	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	50	6	43	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	8	57	5	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	50	6	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	43	8	57	0	0	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)	5	36	8	57	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	43	6	43	1	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	29	7	50	2	14	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	29	8	57	1	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	5	36	8	57	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	7	50	7	50	0	0	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.

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## 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.**



12 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Mucklestone TF9 4DN

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

You work hard in lessons, and many of you do well in reading.

You behave well, eat healthily and do lots of exercise.

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

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

Your headteacher, staff and governors are determined to improve your school. We have asked them to do these things to make sure that it gets better:

- improve provision for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- enable governors to support you and the staff more and ensure that teachers look closely at how well you are doing in each subject
- raise the quality of all teaching to that of the best.

Thank you again for your contribution to the inspection.

Yours faithfully

Rob Isaac

Lead inspector

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