

St Mary's CofE (A) First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124344
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	340548
Inspection dates	8–9 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Johnstone
Headteacher	Jeni Hammersley
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, and held meetings with staff, the chair of the governing body, pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, looked at teachers' planning; the school's tracking of pupils' progress, policies and procedures for safeguarding and bullying, and analysed 50 parental questionnaires.

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

- the progress children make in acquiring basic skills of writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the effectiveness of teaching and learning in meeting the needs of all pupils and the use of assessment in raising standard in writing
- how effective the school's systems are for keeping pupils safe
- the role of the governing body in holding the school to account for standards and improvement since the last inspection.

Information about the school

This is an average sized school. Most of the children come from white British backgrounds. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. Since the last inspection, more pupils having special educational needs have been admitted to the school but numbers are broadly in line with those seen nationally. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Foundation Stage unit along with several of the younger pupils from Year 1. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are taught in two mixed age classes. The school is in receipt of Sports Mark and Health Promoting School awards and is working towards its Artsmark award. The school has recently been allocated the Dyslexia Friendly status.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. It has many good features and is overwhelmingly popular with both parents and pupils. 'You know that your children are well looked after because they are so happy' said one parent speaking for many.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of the many exciting learning opportunities that are on offer. They make good gains in learning and attain the levels expected in all areas but they sometimes struggle with forming their letters correctly as teachers do not always take the opportunity to model how this is done. This, in turn, has a knock on effect on writing throughout the school. The outdoor area is well equipped to support children's development but there are missed opportunities for supporting budding writing skills.

By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 4, standards meet the national expectations for nine year old pupils in English, mathematics and science. At the end of Year 2 pupils attain average levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. Achievement over time is satisfactory and there have been good recent improvements in speaking and listening, and also in reading and mathematics. There is clear evidence of accelerating progress in Years 2 to 4 in response to more effective teaching.

Teaching is satisfactory with examples of several good lessons seen. Not all teachers are using information from assessment securely to move pupils onto the next level, especially in writing. As a result, teaching is not yet consistently good throughout the school. Since the last inspection, teachers have improved their questioning skills. These skills are now good and are well supported by plenty of well structured activities for speaking and listening. Good practice is taking root and, as a result, pupils' learning and progress are improving.

Behaviour and attitudes to learning are good because pupils are interested in the learning opportunities offered. This includes the good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors including the vicar, local charities, artists and musicians. Attendance is satisfactory and the school is working hard with a small group of parents who experience difficulty in sending their children to school regularly.

The quality of care that the school provides to all pupils is good. Pupils are kept safe; there are good safeguarding procedures and the most vulnerable pupils are supported by effective partnerships with support agencies. The school's drive to promote equality and to eliminate discrimination is good and evident in all its practices. 'We are one big, happy family here, we all care for one another and there is no bullying or name calling.'

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said one very happy pupil. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as is their knowledge of the local and global community. 'We might be different in what we believe, but we all like to play with one another.' said one pupil from the school council. Pupils contribute well to the community. They know about healthy lifestyles and work well in teams and, as a result of meeting academic expectations for their age; they achieve a satisfactory understanding of economic well being.

The monitoring of teaching and learning is satisfactory; thanks to the drive and determination of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Staff are pursuing ambitious targets for school improvement but they are not yet fully involved in self-evaluation. Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Governors fulfil their statutory duties but are not yet challenging the headteacher enough to give them further evidence of how the impact of their spending decisions is reflected in pupils' academic outcomes. In spite of several staffing issues the school has not lost its focus on continuing to raise standards. It has a satisfactory capacity to advance further because of recent improvements in speaking and listening, reading and mathematics and the teaching and marking of pupils' work.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standard in writing by:
 - providing more opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to develop their writing skills both indoors and outdoors
 - ensuring that adults model correct letter formation through a range of play and focused learning situations
 - ensuring that all teachers use assessment information effectively to build on pupils' prior attainment and take pupils of all abilities to the next level of attainment.
- Ensure that staff at all levels and governors are fully involved in evaluating the impact of the school's provision on pupils' academic outcomes by becoming more familiar with self-evaluation procedures.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

In the vast majority of lessons pupils' learning is satisfactory. There are now more examples of good progress but this is not yet reflected in end of year test results in Year 2 and Year 4. In good lessons in Year 2 and Year 3/4 effective learning takes place; pupils hang onto the teachers' every word. They work busily with talking partners and eagerly put up their hands ensuring not a moment is wasted. One 'exhausted' pupil in Year 2 said 'You don't have time to breathe, there is so much to learn and the teacher just gives me more work as soon as I've finished'. Pupils giggled with delight when they checked their answers with one another in mathematics and nearly strained their arms

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when trying to beat one another to get the right answer. In these classes pupils were keen to please and to do their best. Nevertheless, teachers are not yet using information from assessment to ensure that pupils know exactly what to do to get higher levels, especially in writing. This prevents teaching from being even more effective. Pupils with special educational needs and more capable pupils make the same progress as other pupils; they are well supported in lessons by knowledgeable teaching assistants.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show respect towards the wide range of religious faiths and celebrations found in multi-cultural Britain. They explore feelings in lessons and when asked who they could turn to if they were feeling a bit uneasy one pupil said 'God, because he is our friend and will listen to us.' In assemblies pupils are very respectful and thank God for the harvest. The school council is very proud of the changes made to school dinners and say that they are very healthy. Pupils grow their own vegetables and know that five a day are needed for a healthy body. They collect money for a wide range of charities and this, coupled with many good links with local community, helps them make a positive contribution to the local community and beyond. Pupils have helped children in Kenya buy school uniforms and are rightly proud of their efforts. They acquire a satisfactory but improving level of skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology that contribute satisfactorily to their economic well being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3

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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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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How effective is the provision?

Pupils are enthusiastic and clearly enjoy their education; they are keen to participate because of the good learning opportunities offered both in lessons and after school 'We love trips' said one Year 4 pupil. Staff have put in many hours planning exciting topics such as 'Narnia', this resulted in pupils in a good Year 3/4 literacy lesson eagerly finding interesting adjectives to describe the snow queen. In mathematics, pupils enjoy playing games and respond well to solving mathematical problems in groups. Good use of resources, including teaching assistants, also aids learning. Visits from the librarian fuel pupils' love of reading and the use of the wide range of library books has improved pupils' reading skills.

All teachers have warm professional relationships with their pupils. They give clear explanations; this is reinforced by teaching assistants who support and assess the learning of more vulnerable pupils and encourage effective learning habits. Teachers react promptly to pupils' achievements and know what to say to re-engage them in their learning. For example, they use aspects of their writing on the interactive white board, praise attempts and point out errors for correction. They mark pupils' written work well, and give pointers for improvement but in class they sometimes miss noting the skills pupils will need to access the higher levels especially in writing.

The good links with outside agencies result in all pupils getting the help they need in overcoming any barriers to success. Good links with the local middle school ensure that pupils are well prepared for their next stages of learning and promote their sense of wellbeing because they will know some familiar faces.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is ably supported by the deputy headteacher. They have a keen eye for what is successful. School self-evaluation is accurate and clear educational direction is given by the senior management team. The school development plan identifies all the relevant areas for development but these are not fully underpinned by references to finance. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The headteacher sets ambitious targets to drive improvement and, together with the

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deputy headteacher, hold staff to account for improving pupils' achievement. The high-quality partnership with the church, local community, the wide range of support agencies contributes to good community cohesion. The comprehensive curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to learn about Africa, India, Kenya and the introduction of French gives pupils good insight into the global dimension.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

This good provision is well led and managed by the Early Years Foundation Stage co-ordinator who will stop at nothing to ensure that her pupils enjoy learning. Teaching is good and there is a real sense of teamwork in the setting where teaching assistants provide valued support to staff. Children's starting points are lower than those normally found and on entry to Year 1 children are well prepared for most aspects of formal work in everything but writing, which is a little below where it should be. Achievement and progress are good but on occasions children are not learning enough in outdoor play especially in developing their writing skills.

Staff undertake focused observations on children and identify their next steps in learning. They interact sensitively with them providing good role models. Children settle into routines quickly because they know what is expected of them. They thrive on the praise, secure welfare arrangements and good relationships provided in this unit and consequently make good progress.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents express confidence in the school. 'My children love their teachers', 'this is a great place to be', 'I have no concerns over my child's learning' are typical comments from parents. In interview, parents were delighted with the support their children receive and that teachers always have time for them. A very small minority raised concerns that the school does not deal with bullying appropriately. Inspectors interviewed pupils, scrutinised documentation, observed children in the playground and in lessons and saw no disruptive or aggressive behaviour. Pupils say that playground buddies really improve play times and that the midday supervisors are 'very nice and kind'.

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 (A) 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 inspector received 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 186 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	58	19	38	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	58	16	32	2	4	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	32	27	54	3	6	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	36	27	54	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	23	46	23	46	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	44	23	46	3	6	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	52	20	40	1	2	1	2
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)	22	44	22	44	0	0	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	44	20	40	2	4	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	36	21	42	3	6	3	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	34	25	50	4	8	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	21	42	21	42	2	4	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	52	18	36	1	2	2	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 October 2009

Dear pupils

Inspection of St Mary's CofE (A) First School, Uttoxeter, ST14 7LX

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for taking the time to answer our questions. Your school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education and it has been successful in improving your speaking and listening, reading and mathematical skills. Here are some of the things that we found out about in your school:

- children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in their learning
- the vast majority of you make satisfactory progress in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology and you attain the levels seen in most skills
- those of you who find learning difficult make satisfactory progress, just like all the other pupils
- you behave well, you have good attitudes to learning and you are kind to one another in the playground
- teaching is satisfactory; your teachers are very fond of you all, we saw some good lessons and we agree with you that they look after you well
- your headteacher and governing body have ensured that you work in a safe environment
- you know a lot of things about other cultures
- you are always very keen to answer questions in class and you help those in need; well done for helping buy all those uniforms for children in the Kenyan school that you support.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and governing body to make few improvements, you can help by:

- in the reception class, forming your letters correctly when you are playing indoors and outdoors and asking your teachers to show you how to do this
- asking your teachers to tell you of what the next steps of learning are when you start writing activities
- tell your teachers and governors how much you are learning when new resources are purchased.

We hope that these few recommendations will really improve your school quickly. Please

thank your parents for all the questionnaires that they returned.

Yours sincerely

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

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