

St Mary's CofE First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125999
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	340890
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Reporting inspector	David Marshall

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pauline Davenport
Headteacher	Gillian Leadbetter-Sims
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2007
School address	Washington Pulborough RH20 4AP
Telephone number	01903 892401
Fax number	01903 892945
Email address	office@st-marys-washington.w-sussex.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Ten lessons and six different teachers were observed. Discussions were held with the acting headteacher, teaching, support and administrative staff, governors, parents and pupils. The school's documentation was scrutinised carefully and included school improvement plans, the tracking of pupils' progress, staff and governor meeting records and safeguarding documentation. In addition, 59 questionnaires from parents and carers, 13 staff questionnaires and 42 pupil questionnaires were analysed.

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

- The level of achievement of the current pupils and the impact of the school's measures to raise achievement in mathematics for the more able pupils
- Pupils' personal development and the effectiveness of the school's measures to enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- The school's strategies for assessment and analysis of progress, and how well pupils are enabled to be involved in assessing their own learning
- In the light of the recent changes, how successfully leaders and managers at all levels, including the governors, are enabling continuity and improvement.

Information about the school

The school serves a rural, commuter area south of Horsham in West Sussex. The school welcomes pupils not only from the immediate area, but also from surrounding villages. At present, two thirds of pupils are from outside the school's catchment area. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and only a small number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few do not speak English as their first language. The school has achieved the Active Mark and Artsmark Gold awards. After the retirement of the long-term headteacher, the school is being led by an acting headteacher ' a deputy headteacher seconded for a term from another local school, who had been in post at St Mary's for just over a week at the time of the inspection.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

St Mary's is an outstanding school. It has a considerable number of strengths. Over very many years, the whole staff, led by the strong leadership team, initiated many changes and steered the school forward very effectively. The wide range of systems and strategies put into place to address the school's well-identified priorities has continued to be successful. The school has improved and secured its outstanding overall effectiveness noted at the time of the last inspection. The school's view of itself is accurate and its track record of raising, and sustaining, achievement and implementing change shows it is extremely well placed to build even further on its strengths and has an excellent capacity to improve. One parent summed up the views of many by writing, 'We are relatively new to the school ' and are thrilled with it. Excellent leadership, creative, exciting, stimulating, professional. Cannot fault it.'

An extremely effective Early Years Foundation Stage enables children to make an excellent start to school. Due to careful early assessments, pupils begin to make good progress immediately. Pupils' standards have been well above average by the end of Year 2 for many years, and significantly above those expected for their age by the time they leave school in Year 5. Achievement is outstanding throughout the school, including in mathematics, due to the rigorous systems to track the progress of each pupil and to identify where additional teaching will be most beneficial. Pupils achieve well across a wide range of subjects. The excellent learning support assistants, led by the outstanding coordinator, ensure pupils who need extra help are exceptionally well cared for by identifying their needs early and providing focused support.

The school has introduced a range of initiatives to make the curriculum more relevant and exciting. It covers all subjects well and is enhanced by an excellent range of additional activities, visits and visitors. As a result, pupils increasingly enjoy the opportunities they are given. However, as the school acknowledges, they now need to implement their well-formulated plans to enable pupils to practise and consolidate their information and communication technology (ICT) skills in a more consistent way.

The pastoral support, guidance and care provided for all pupils are outstanding and, as a result, by the time pupils leave the school, they are mature and thoughtful and make an effective contribution to the school and the local community. Pupils behave brilliantly in lessons and around the school, reflecting the staff's high expectations and their exceptional level of care and moral guidance. These features, combined with the fact that pupils feel extremely safe, play a strong part in the success of the school.

Attendance is well above average, as pupils enjoy all their time at school. Pupils' behaviour and their keen appetite for teamwork, together with their outstanding skills in English, mathematics and science, prepare them exceptionally well for the next stage in

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their learning.

The school does much to promote its place in the local community and works effectively with the many local nurseries, playgroups and businesses. The excellent work of the parents, carers and families association, SMILE, is appreciated by all concerned. The audit of community cohesion, undertaken by the governors and staff, is underpinned by a careful analysis of these different factors in the context of the school. These links with the local community are good and pupils' awareness of, and preparation for, living and working in a culturally diverse world are developed well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that in the next year the current plans are embedded so that: - pupils are given the maximum opportunities to practise and reinforce their skills and learning using information and communication technology.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils relish their learning at this school. As all lesson observations showed, teachers provide interesting resources that enthuse pupils and keep them engaged in their work. When pupils are asked to work together, they do so very effectively. They keep on task, challenge each other and plan their work carefully. Pupils enjoy working independently, and respond well to teachers' questions, particularly where these really probe their thinking and understanding.

All groups of pupils achieve outstanding outcomes at this school. There is a high level of achievement across a wide range of subjects. For instance, art is a strength of the school and pupils have many opportunities to develop their painting and drawing talents. The standard of singing witnessed during the inspection in assemblies was outstanding. These outcomes led to the school achieving the Artsmark Gold award. The pupils' keenness to succeed was clear in the Years 4/5 class lessons where they collaborated on stories based on Greek mythical characters. The most striking feature that the pupils displayed, at all times, was the caring way they took notice of each other and applauded each other's successes.

Pupils' well-being and personal development is outstanding, and throughout the school relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. As a result, the atmosphere for learning created by the whole staff is supportive and caring. As one parent said, 'It is a vibrant, caring school which caters for the every need of the individual socially, spiritually and academically.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, contributing to their excellent behaviour.

Pupils show very caring attitudes to each other and the environment. They know there is always someone they can turn to in moments of difficulty. They acquire an excellent understanding of healthy living and an excellent awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe. Pupils were keen to show how much they enjoy the responsibility of the school council or as buddies for 'lonely' pupils on the playground. The school council is justifiably proud of the input it has made to influence changes. Its input is mature and

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thoughtful, and much appreciated by all staff. In discussions with the school council and other pupils, the older ones made sure the younger ones had their chance to speak. The way pupils treat each other and speak to adults with such kindness and respect was a pleasure to witness.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Observations of teaching confirmed that throughout the school, pupils make excellent progress regardless of their background or ability because of the very effective approach adopted by teachers. Pupils are keen to please their teachers and other adults. This was evident in an excellent English lesson in the Years 2/3 class. As in most lessons, the pupils could hardly wait to share their thoughts and ideas, in this case on the artefacts they had excavated from the local field.

Staff's high expectations of pupils' progress are reflected in the challenging targets set for individuals and year groups. In the most effective lessons, the careful planning is implemented with enthusiasm and care and these targets are used effectively. This was clear in the excellent poems written in a lesson in the Years 4/5 class. The pupils were

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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enthusiastic and sensible as they pondered on their feelings while they wrote about abstract nouns. The teacher's excellent use of praise and attention to using their English targets while pupils' learned how to become story tellers was a reflection of the way in which in all lessons observed teachers took all learning opportunities that arose.

The impact of the school's outstanding support, guidance and care is evident in the pupils' excellent standards of behaviour and social skills. Links with their next school help to give the oldest pupils a taste and good preparation for their transition. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are very positive about the efforts the school takes to make school life as trouble free as possible for pupils who are more vulnerable or who find behaving well more difficult.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

It is clear that over very many years the quality of the leadership has been an inspiration to all involved in the school. This is manifest in the systems and procedures in place that enhance the well-being and education of all pupils as individuals. Complacency has not been tolerated in any aspect of the school, and it is clear this is still the case. One way in which the leadership's exemplary focus has been realised is in the extremely effective way relationships are made with all pupils, parents and carers and the local community. Inspection evidence shows the acting headteacher is working tirelessly to maintain this position, while introducing some new, and well-planned, ideas. As one member of staff recorded, the acting headteacher has brought fresh ideas and action plans to her role. She is 'very hands-on and has made every effort to get to know the school, staff, pupils and parents'.

Teamwork is excellent. Staff are focused relentlessly on further improvement and work brilliantly together. All this enables the school to set the right targets to become even better. The governing body is fully involved in the process of school evaluation and governors bring a wide range of skills to bear on this. They very effectively hold the school to account and help with development planning. Their analysis enables the school to promote community cohesion well within the school and local community. Pupils are also beginning to gain a good understanding of how others live in the United Kingdom and much further away. The school takes its duty to promote equal opportunities seriously. Leaders ensure that discrimination of any sort is not tolerated. They value the opinions of parents and carers and pupils and act upon these to ensure all are treated

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fairly. Procedures to safeguard pupils' well-being, safety and health are extremely thorough and all members of staff are well trained in child protection routines.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make an outstanding start to their education in the Reception/Year 1 class. The excellent way the setting is organised so that the Reception children get a substantial amount of time in their own year group, while the Year 1 pupils are taught separately, is testament to the care shown by all staff. The huge level of commitment shown by all Early Years Foundation Stage staff is also evident in the way that children quickly settle into the school and start to learn, despite coming from many different settings. As one parent wrote, 'Excellent information for new starters and welcome sessions for children starting school.'

Staff work especially hard to give the children a real sense of determining their own way forward, which guarantees their full involvement in all activities. Children make rapid progress and achieve exceptionally well, especially in their language, and social and emotional development. Adults have high expectations, provide very clear routines and enable children to build strong, positive relationships. The enthusiasm and enjoyment of the children as they drew and acted out their 'little dragon' stories was spellbinding. The classroom is stimulating and resources are used exceptionally well as children move from one activity to another. The outside area, although small, provides the same exciting level of challenge and stimulation, especially for the more capable children. Staff get to know the children very well. They make a careful note of all responses and feedback. The information collected about children is used particularly well to ensure

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that the least able and most vulnerable settle and learn well.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents or carers who returned questionnaires or who spoke to the inspection team were very happy with the school. They consider that the school has a dedicated team of staff and a very warm, supportive and friendly atmosphere. The vast majority feel their children make good progress. Inspection evidence shows that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making excellent progress. Parents and carers were particularly impressed with the pastoral support their children receive. Inspectors fully endorse these views. Understandably, a small number are anxious over the change of headteacher. The small number of concerns expressed and the constructive parental criticisms were shared and discussed with the acting headteacher.

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 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 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 89 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	78	12	20	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	78	13	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	54	26	44	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	71	13	22	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	47	80	11	19	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	68	16	27	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	78	12	20	1	2	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)	45	76	11	19	0	0	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	83	7	12	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	49	25	42	2	3	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	58	23	39	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	37	63	15	25	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	81	9	15	2	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

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



30 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England First School, Washington, RH20 4AP

I am writing to thank you all for making us so welcome when we came to the school recently. We did enjoy our visit. Yours is an outstanding school with many strengths, and we agree with what you told us ' it is a really fun place to learn. Here is a list of some of the things that we think are really good.

- The school looks after you very carefully and you all achieve extremely well by the time you leave the school.
- You behave excellently, get along with each other and feel safe in school.
- You all have very good ideas about how to make things better and the teachers always listen to what you want.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to live healthily.
- You find lessons interesting and really enjoy school
- There are plenty of exciting things for you to do both in school and on visits and in clubs.
- The acting headteacher and staff are managing the school extremely well.

Even in excellent schools, some things can be made better. I have asked the teachers to make sure that their plans to provide you with more opportunities to use information and communication technology are implemented as soon as possible.

You must continue to listen carefully and take note of what the teachers say. Then you will all continue to make excellent progress in your learning.

Finally, we would like to thank you once again for all your help. We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

David Marshall

Lead Inspector

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