

St Mary of Charity CE (Aided) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133663
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	341400
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Colyer
Headteacher	Pauline Hann
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 12 lessons and 9 teachers. They met with a governor, members of staff and pupils, looked at a range of school policies and plans, records of pupils' progress, questionnaires returned by staff and pupils and the 25 questionnaires submitted by parents and carers.

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

- the progress made by pupils in Key Stage 2 this year in English and mathematics to assess how well teachers are meeting individual needs and abilities
- the impact of the new headteacher and other senior leaders on school improvement
- the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about the school

Pupils travel from a wide area to attend this small school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion that comes from homes where English is not the first language is well below average. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average for a school of this size and the proportion identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is extremely high. Most of these pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties or have an autistic spectrum disorder. A children's centre shares the school site.

A new headteacher started at the school in April 2010. The school is reducing from two- to one-form entry to meet the reduced demand for school places in the town. The school holds the Activemark award for its work in promoting fitness among pupils.

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****2**

Main findings

This is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. After a period of turbulence in staffing which impacted upon pupils' attainment and progress, the school now has a settled and well-motivated staff who are working hard to make improvements. They show great support for the headteacher who has had a significant effect upon the school's work since she started only a short time ago. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors form a strong team which is now driving the school forward successfully. Careful monitoring and analysis of performance mean that they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children's attainment on entry to the Reception class varies considerably from year to year but is often well below levels expected for their age. By the time they begin Year 1 they have made good progress and this continues through Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 6, attainment in mathematics is broadly average. This is a significant improvement on attainment in mathematics since previous years and has been achieved by a whole-school focus on improving teachers' subject knowledge and expertise. Attainment in English though is below the national average. Spelling and punctuation are often weak and pupils do not develop a neat, fluent style of handwriting. Nonetheless, the school's careful tracking and pupils' workbooks show that attainment is now rising.

Pupils grow into confident young people, who show respect for one another's ideas and opinions. Inspectors agree with pupils who said that they would like more information about how well they are doing. At present, their targets for improvement are not always reviewed as regularly as they might be and pupils are not involved enough in assessing progress towards their individual targets. Pupils' work is marked regularly but teachers do not always provide helpful comments to pupils about how to improve their work.

The school places a high priority on ensuring safeguarding measures are robust and this means that pupils feel safe in class and around the school. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and improving rapidly as a result of more rigorous monitoring procedures introduced by the headteacher and governors. Lessons are well structured and maintain pupils' interest and concentration but activities in English lessons for pupils in Years 3 to 6 sometimes do not meet the needs and abilities of different pupils in the class. Pupils do not receive enough opportunities to practise their literacy skills in different subjects and opportunities are missed to value pupils' writing in wall displays.

The school has made satisfactory improvement overall since the last inspection. Effective work has been done to improve attendance which is now average and standards in mathematics are improving steadily. The current good rate of

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improvement, effective self-evaluation and the commitment and enthusiasm of senior leaders, coupled with strong support from staff, mean that the school has a good capacity for further improvement. Senior leaders recognise that community cohesion is a weaker element of their work; some actions have been taken but as yet, the pupils' understanding of communities, religions and beliefs outside their own experience is limited.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment in English in Key Stage 2 by:
 - ensuring that activities in lessons match pupils' individual needs more closely
 - ensuring that the school's marking policy is implemented consistently
 - implementing a clear handwriting programme
 - promoting literacy more effectively through displays of pupils' work
 - planning more opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills in different subjects (by the end of summer term 2011)
- Extend pupils' involvement in their learning by:
 - providing them with better information to let them know how well they are doing
 - reviewing progress towards targets more regularly
 - involving pupils more effectively in the review of their targets (by December 2010)
- Improve community cohesion by:
 - developing meaningful links with schools and communities within the wider United Kingdom and globally
 - extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultures, religions and beliefs other than their own. (by February 2011)

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils are keen to learn and apply themselves well in lessons. They work well in pairs and small groups but also show good levels of motivation when working independently. They are well behaved, polite and welcoming to visitors. Girls and boys from all ethnic groups and those from homes where English is not the first language achieve satisfactorily and enjoy learning. Work seen in classrooms and in their books show that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making satisfactory progress. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has improved over the past two years and is now broadly average. Progress here is good, because of consistently good teaching throughout the year. Although progress through Key Stage 2 has improved in recent months, attainment by the end of Year 6 is below national averages. Improvements are reflected, for example, in a Years 5/6 class when pupils

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made exceptional progress in a mathematics lesson on three-dimensional shape. They were challenged to think carefully about their existing knowledge and apply this to a new situation. Pupils were enthralled, eagerly discussing the properties of cones and prisms before identifying the shape as an irregular polyhedron.

The school's work to gain the Activemark award has helped pupils to understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. Pupils make a good contribution to their own school community, through their work as monitors and school councillors. They show care and concern for one another. One pupil said, 'We all work well together,' and another remarked, 'We work as a team.' These positive attitudes, coupled with satisfactory attendance, mean they are adequately prepared for their future education. Pupils are clear about what to do if there is any bullying although they say this rarely happens. Pupils' contribution to the wider community is satisfactory but they have a limited knowledge and understanding of cultures, religions and beliefs other than their own.

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	4
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	3
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
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

A satisfactory range of activities is organised to make learning enjoyable for pupils.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils speak enthusiastically about the visits to, for example, Canterbury and the Transport Museum as part of their history work. Occasionally, pupils write about field trips and other activities but overall, the curriculum does not always promote sufficient opportunities for them to practise their reading and writing skills in other subjects. A good number of pupils participate in a range of clubs after school, for example gardening, where they learn how to grow their own vegetables. Pupils in Year 5 learn to play the cello, providing them with a good opportunity to develop their musical talents. The school is already in the process of reviewing the curriculum to make it more relevant and interesting for pupils.

Teachers have positive relationships with pupils and manage behaviour extremely well. They use a variety of strategies to maintain pupils' attention, such as questioning, paired discussion and effective use of interactive whiteboards and visualisers to illustrate specific teaching points. In the best lessons, pupils' interest is engaged successfully through stimulating activities. In a Year 1 English lesson for example, pupils drew 'story maps' to sequence their ideas, then shared them with their partners. They were excited about the activity and made good progress. Marking of pupils' work is regular but does not always include advice to pupils on how to improve.

Pastoral care is satisfactory. Adults have a sound knowledge of pupils and their circumstances and offer appropriate support and encouragement when needed. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and those with autistic spectrum disorders receive satisfactory support from teachers and assistants. They benefit from the secure relationships that they develop with adults, who help them to take an active part in lessons. Intervention groups have proved successful in helping particular pupils at risk of underachievement, especially in mathematics.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has quickly gained a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has implemented a rigorous plan to secure improvement. This is already showing results, for example improving teaching and assessment procedures. She and the deputy headteacher form a strong team who embed ambition successfully among staff and drive improvement well. Phase leaders are dynamic and working well to support school improvement. The headteacher has taken a decisive lead on developing the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities which, while

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satisfactory, is improving rapidly as a result of her intervention. A clear monitoring cycle involves senior leaders and governors effectively. The introduction of more rigorous and regular progress meetings with teachers means that potential underachievement is quickly identified and prompt action is taken. Staff promote equality of opportunity satisfactorily, analysing information about pupils' progress to ensure all are achieving appropriately, whatever their background or needs. Racist incidents are rare, but senior staff and governors tackle them promptly if they do occur.

The governing body has recently changed its structure to use the skills of governors more effectively. The new system of focused visits, linked to areas of school development, provides governors with useful information which they are beginning to use effectively to support strategic planning. Governors play an active role in monitoring safeguarding procedures, ensuring that there is a constant focus on maintaining rigorous systems. Governors have completed an audit of provision for community cohesion and there are clear plans for improvement, including strengthening links with parents and carers to help them take a more active role in their children's education. Governors and staff have already started work in promoting community cohesion more strongly within the locality and further afield.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Many children have low social and emotional skills when they first start in Reception but they quickly settle in and begin to develop their confidence and independence. The atmosphere in Reception is stimulating and inviting and this means that children come

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into school happily each morning, ready to engage in all the activities provided for them. They make good progress over the year and the majority reach nationally expected levels by the time they transfer to Year 1.

The development of personal and social skills is a high priority. The children develop good manners and begin to understand how to take turns when they play games with adults, such as when feeding the 'Hungry Caterpillar' with various fruits. They develop a good understanding of healthy lifestyles, enjoying a range of fruit and vegetables during snack time.

Adults are well qualified and provide good challenge and support for children. Children's progress is tracked very carefully and this information is used well to plan for the next steps in children's learning. There is an appropriate balance of adult-led activities and those that children choose for themselves. The outdoor area has been recently developed but the school recognises that more needs to be done to improve the range of independent activities offered to children.

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 relatively small proportion of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire expressed positive views about the school's work. The overwhelming majority said that the school kept their children safe and helped their children develop healthy lifestyles. They thought that behaviour was well managed, that children's needs were met effectively and that the school listened to their suggestions and concerns. A small minority had concerns about leadership and management, mainly because of the changes that have occurred over the past year. Inspectors found that the school was being led well and that staff were working together effectively for the benefit of the pupils. A few thought that the school did not help them support their children's learning at home and inspectors agreed with their views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary of Charity Church of England (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 25 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 212 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	7	28	16	64	2	8	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	7	28	17	68	1	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	16	19	76	2	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	24	17	68	2	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	10	40	14	56	1	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	20	16	64	4	16	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	28	17	68	0	0	1	4
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)	9	36	14	56	2	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	28	17	68	1	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	16	20	80	1	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	20	19	76	1	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	36	11	44	4	16	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	10	40	13	52	1	4	1	4

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

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

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



2 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary of Charity Church of England (Aided) Primary School, Faversham
ME13 8AP

Thank you so much for welcoming us recently and telling us your opinions about your school. Your views, along with everything else that we saw, helped us to form a clear view about how well your school works. You go to a satisfactory school and these are some of the important things we found out about it:

- All the adults look after you and keep you safe in school.
- You understand what it means to be healthy, and many of you enjoy the nutritious school lunches and maintain good levels of fitness.
- You look after each other very well.
- Your behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- The children in Reception get a good start to their education.
- The adults in charge are doing a good job in checking how well things are going and planning for the future.

We think you should be reaching higher levels in reading and writing and we have asked your teachers to make sure that lessons are set at the right levels to ensure you all make better progress. We have asked them to help you to improve your handwriting so that your work is neat and tidy and teachers can display your written work on the walls for everyone to admire. We have also asked them to give you more information about how well you are doing and involve you more in setting your own targets for improvement and in assessing your own progress. Finally we have asked the adults to plan more opportunities for you to be involved in your local community and learn more about pupils who live in other communities in the United Kingdom and overseas.

You can all play your part in helping your school to become even better by making sure you continue to work hard, behave well and attend school every day.

Yours sincerely

Mary Summers

Lead inspector

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