

St Mary's Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123784
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	359515
Inspection dates	29–30 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Steffi Penny

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	292
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Hampson
Headteacher	Helen Rooks
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2010
School address	Oakfield Road Bridgwater TA6 7LX
Telephone number	01278 422691
Fax number	01278 431794
Email address	office@st-marys.somerset.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	29–30 June 2010
Inspection number	359515

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

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

T: 08456 404045
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. They visited 23 lessons and saw 14 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, looking at pupils' exercise books, school data about pupils' achievement and progress, monitoring records, safeguarding and child protection documentation and other school documents. The inspection team analysed questionnaires completed by staff, pupils in Years 3 to 6 and those from 91 parents and carers.

It looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' progress and how effectively information about it is used to improve teaching and learning by:
- providing sufficiently challenging work for individual pupils in lessons
- alerting teachers clearly to those pupils at risk of underachievement
- pupils' knowledge of the next steps in their learning
- pupils' awareness about how children and their families from other backgrounds and heritages contribute to life in Great Britain.

Information about the school

St Mary's is slightly larger than most primary schools, with an increasing proportion of pupils coming from outside the immediate catchment area. The number on roll is rising and the school is oversubscribed from the Reception Year to Year 3. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities broadly average, with a variety of different types and levels of need. Almost all pupils are of a White British heritage. At least 15 pre-school settings serve the school, including a privately run nursery that shares the school site. It works in partnership with the Quantock Learning Alliance and the Sedgemoor Learning Alliance.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Mary's provides a well-rounded education that is good value for money. There is a very strong commitment towards making every child feel valued and fully involved in all aspects of school life. Clear communication with parents and carers, combined with good work in partnership with others, ensures exemplary care, guidance and support for pupils and their families. This highly focused support for all pupils and the good opportunities for them to explore, investigate and discover together enable them to enjoy their time in school. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Staff, parents and carers and pupils are, rightly, proud of these outcomes and, as one parent/carer commented, 'Behaviour at the school is impeccable with the children learning more core values of respect, courtesy, and manners.' Another added, 'Any issues are dealt with quickly and with thought for my child.'

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start and are well prepared for learning that is more formal when they enter Year 1. Attainment levels vary between year groups because of the school's changing population and increase in size. They are broadly in line with, and sometimes above, national averages throughout the school and improving. Given pupils' varied starting points, this represents good progress overall. Any minor fluctuations in the performance in subjects or year groups are identified early and resolved effectively. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities perform equally as well as their peers. Teaching is nearly always at least good, but does not yet have an outstanding impact on learning because not enough emphasis is placed on creating opportunities for pupils to raise their own levels of challenge. Pupils have a general awareness of their targets in literacy and numeracy. Adults do not encourage pupils to read or refer to these steps often enough in lessons to ensure that pupils are constantly aware of the next steps in learning that they are aiming for.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development is already outstanding. Cultural development is good and the school has firm plans in place to provide from next term first-hand experiences for pupils to learn more about cultural diversity in Great Britain. Very good links have been established with the local and global communities, so that pupils have been able to make good contributions to them. Pupils and their parents and carers have good opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and make improvements. Pupils are proud of their various roles and responsibilities, which they take very seriously. They help to increase the enjoyment of other pupils in a range of activities. For example, the dance aerobic club designs the 'wake-and-shake' movements to be energising and fun, whilst the 'subject champions' help to lead and challenge learning for their classes in their specialist subject area.

Pupils gain excellent knowledge, skills and positive attitudes to make healthy choices, both now and in the future. Pupils across the school are able to express an excellent understanding of their own and others' safety. They say that they feel totally safe at school and know who to go to if they have problems, knowing that those problems will be resolved effectively. At the time of the inspection, safeguarding requirements were fully met.

Governors are active members of the school community. Some are very new to their role and they have been given effective help and support to be able to challenge and support the school effectively. Senior leaders and governors have an accurate picture of the strengths of the school and areas that need further development. Self-evaluation is robust, regularly leading to adaptation or changes that increase the potential for pupils' achievement and well-being. Given also the increase in pupils' achievements and the continued and planned improvements to provision, this means that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - provide opportunities for pupils to be able to increase their own level of challenge in lessons
 - ensuring that pupils refer to the next steps in their learning more frequently in all lessons, so that they have clear targets to aim for at all times.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' behaviour, interest, readiness, and desire for learning are exceptionally well developed. This is due to the excellent staff role-modelling, permeation of the school ethos and consistent application of equalities and behaviour policies. Pupils express that they feel safe and were outraged when asked if bullying might occur in their school. They know who to go to if they have a problem and older pupils were very proud of their roles as peer mediators.

Lessons develop pupils' personal values so that pupils take turns, share well and have an outstanding understanding of fairness. This was clearly seen in several literacy lessons where pupils were exploring the relevance and impact of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. The improved achievement of pupils brought about by experiencing cross-curricular topic work was also seen in the rich stories they created about children having adventures inside a pyramid. The 'Big Writing' initiative is clearly having a positive impact on pupils' improving literacy skills.

There is a strong emphasis on healthy eating, with parents and carers involved in the selection of the provider of lunches and the school council monitoring and consulting on possible improvements. There is a vast range of sporting activities during and after the end of the school day, which are extremely well supported.

Pupils are consistently punctual and really enjoy their learning. Their highly developed

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

social and teamworking skills in particular ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education and later life. Attendance is average. The school goes to great lengths to promote the importance of regular attendance but the levels are affected by too many instances of parents and carers taking their children on holiday during school term time.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Outdoor provision is excellent, with a wide variety of learning activities and spaces. Some of the buildings are much less effective at supporting learning. During the inspection, in spite of the very best efforts by staff, some buildings were hot, stuffy and cramped. However, excellent learning environments are created by highly dedicated staff who are so proud to show what their pupils have achieved. Classroom displays are also used well to aid learning and to remind pupils about the success criteria in lessons. Good, up-to-date training of staff, for example, focused training on the education of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, means that all classroom-based staff are in a good position to support individual learners' needs.

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

Responses to higher levels of need are coordinated effectively because responsibility is taken by the whole school and not just left to individuals. Consequently, the curriculum for these pupils is tailored closely to their needs, so that they can do as well as their peers.

Following its revision three years ago, the curriculum has been developed on the basis of a thematic and creative approach. It meets the needs of all pupils and it is well organised. There is an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities available to pupils. The school production of the musical *Oliver* is one example of the extra time and effort that all members of the school are prepared to invest to enrich the learning and life experiences of the pupils.

The excellent guidance and support for all pupils provide a bedrock of security from which they increase their levels of self-confidence and flourish as happy and healthy children and young people. The school's work with other agencies and partners helps to improve the lives of children and their families who face difficulties due to their circumstances. A good range of partnership activities make a strong contribution to pupils' learning and well-being.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders ensure that the school is at the hub of its local community. They are passionate about removing barriers and discrimination to improve people's lives. This and service to others lie at the heart of the school ethos. There are missed opportunities for the school to record and celebrate its longer-term success stories.

There are good links with schools in the Czech Republic, Kenya, Tanzania and the United States of America. These have helped widen pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultures and faiths. The school has worked hard since the last inspection to make meaningful links with a school in a contrasting area elsewhere in Great Britain, and formal liaison with such a school will start in September.

Partnerships are used well to drive ambition and to establish improved outcomes for pupils that the school alone could not provide, for example, the Sedgemoor Sports Alliance that supports the school through its cricketing expertise. Another example is the parents' and carers' forum that aids communication between parents and carers and the school and helps them to work together towards general school improvement.

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

Training of staff and governors, particularly on issues related to child protection, is of a high quality. The school integrates issues about safety and safeguarding into the curriculum and pupils articulate a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The school is very proactive in building relationships with other agencies to support collaborative working that reduces the risk of harm to its pupils. The school's record keeping in this area is detailed and of a good quality.

The varying gifts and talents within the governing body complement each other very well and governors are deployed effectively in the different committees to exploit their areas of expertise. They are not complacent and this is clearly demonstrated by the way they seek and undertake training to keep up-to-date, for example, about the nature of community cohesion and best practice in appointing new staff.

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	2
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	1
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in their learning and development. This is because the good, and increasingly better, teaching they receive is rooted in expert knowledge of early child development and learning. Children's development records are well documented. However, there are missed opportunities to encourage pre-school providers to give more, recorded detail when children first start school.

Children are happy and feel secure due to the wonderful, bright and welcoming environment created for them. The wide range of resources is up-to-date and stimulating. The school has prudently jointly funded many of them with the private

nursery on the same site, to the benefit of both. The joint ownership of equipment and outdoor areas helps children to learn how to share and play with children of different ages. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage at St Mary's learn how to take responsibility for small tasks and how to care for themselves and each other. They are enthusiastic about what they are learning and their behaviour is exceptionally good. Children's health and well-being are given the highest priority and are enhanced by robust and effective policies and practice. There are effective links with parents and carers, other agencies and providers. Parents and carers said that induction to the school was very well managed. They were well informed and their children were able to visit frequently before starting school.

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	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the confidential Ofsted questionnaire are very happy with the education the school provides. They felt that the caring ethos based on trust and traditional family values was a major strength; inspection evidence concurred. A very small number of parents and carers raised individual concerns that followed no particular pattern. Inspectors investigated their concerns but found insufficient evidence to support 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's Church of England 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 91 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 292 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	64	31	34	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	71	78	20	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	43	51	56	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	51	44	48	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	58	64	33	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	49	43	47	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	48	44	48	1	1	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)	46	51	44	48	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	53	41	45	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	64	28	31	4	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	36	56	62	0	0	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	52	57	37	41	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	54	59	36	40	0	0	1	1

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 pupils' 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.



1 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Primary School, Bridgwater TA2 7LX

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for helping us during the inspection. We really enjoyed seeing you and hearing what you had to say about your school. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found out about your school.

You are getting a good, rounded education. You have an excellent moral compass and your behaviour is fantastic. You are exceptionally well cared for. All of you are doing much better than you were when inspectors last came to your school. This is because adults at your school have worked hard to make changes to the way things are learned. You told us that you really enjoyed lessons and learned much more now you were doing more practical activities, but that you would like still more of them. We also noticed that some of you go on holiday when you should be in school.

We know that your headteacher and all the staff work so very hard to improve the school. To make it even better, we have suggested that you and your teachers should do two things.

We think you need to refer to the next steps in your learning more often in all the lessons that you can. For example, when writing sentences as part of information and communication technology lessons, you should think about your literacy 'next steps'. Sometimes you could do more complicated or harder work in lessons. We think that, when you are finding your work too easy, you should be able to give yourself something harder to do that links with the next steps in your learning.

Thank you so much for sharing your incredible singing in hymn practice and for the taster of your production of Oliver. You and your parents and carers are rightly proud of all the hard work that has gone into making it and your other activities, such as cricket, a great success. Please thank your parents and carers for the helpful comments they made on the questionnaires. We know you have a great website so if you want to see the full report please go to ours which is at this link: www.ofsted.gov.uk. I hope that you carry on enjoying school and working hard, and wish you all success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.