

St Mary's Island Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132056
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	360355
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Hilary Macdonald HMI

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	405
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Kevin Goad
Headteacher	Sharon Day
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 14 lessons and saw 14 teachers. During the inspection, meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation that included school development plans, subject improvement plans, policy documents, monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, and the tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress. Inspectors looked at 135 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and those completed by staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The consistency of the quality of teaching and learning, pupils' progress and attainment throughout the school.
- The use and effectiveness of a range of assessment and performance data including target setting and marking of pupils' work.
- The effectiveness of the curriculum in meeting the needs of all pupils.
- The strengths and impact of leaders and managers in improving school performance.

Information about the school

St Mary's Island Church of England (Aided) Primary School is a larger-than-average primary school set in an area of regeneration. The school opened in 1999, and is now almost at full capacity as a two-form entry school. As there is no church on the island, the school building was designed to serve as both a school and a church.

The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with the proportion from minority ethnic groups just below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average and the percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is also lower than that found nationally.

St Mary's has close association with other churches in Medway, with the Diocese of Rochester and with a school and church in Uganda. The school has several awards reflecting its commitment to promoting pupils' healthy lifestyles. These awards include the Activemark for Exceptional Provision of Physical Education and Healthy School accreditation. Breakfast club is provided at the school, managed by the governing body, and Ofsted-registered after-school provision is also available.

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

St Mary's Island is a satisfactory and improving school which promotes pupils' personal development well. Great importance is placed on the quality of relationships with children and ensuring they enjoy learning in a safe, but exciting, environment. Pupils are well behaved in all classes and around the school. They understand and respond well to the school's high expectations for their behaviour. They learn and play well together, showing respect for all members of the school community.

The strong Christian ethos of the school is highly visible through the dual use of the premises as the community church, through the displays in the entrance hall, the mission statement, 'Anchored in God, striving for excellence', and through the pupils' keen sense of social and moral responsibility.

Pupils' outcomes are improving. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Although some pupils in some year groups make good progress to reach above-average levels, there is not a consistent pattern of good progress for all pupils throughout the school. Pupils' performance in English has improved well to above-average levels in 2010, and the school has rightly identified the need to improve attainment in mathematics and science to the same levels. Improvements secured in English underpin the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further. Attendance and punctuality are outstanding and the vast majority of pupils are well motivated to learn. Most effective progress is made when pupils are clear about what exactly it is they are learning, when there is a brisk pace to lessons and when learning provides challenge for pupils of all abilities. This is not fully consistent across the school for all pupils and, as a result, pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. The most vulnerable pupils are well supported and those with statements of special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of how carefully the learning and care are managed. Higher-ability pupils also make good progress; however, middle-ability pupils make only satisfactory progress. In some lessons, pupils were seen to review their own learning with each other or with their teacher or a teaching assistant; this positive practice, however, is not effectively in place throughout the school.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit from effective provision and make a good start to school life. They are well prepared for transition to Year 1, having reached just above age-related expectations. Very good relationships are built with parents and carers and there are good systems for communication.

Pupils are extremely positive about their school. They talk with great enthusiasm about the recently introduced creative curriculum. Notably, Year 4 pupils were eager to talk about the recent transformation of their class into a galleon. Pupils wore costumes and enacted the life of Tudor explorers. An interactive corridor display records this event. As one pupil said: 'It was really good fun. Tudor day was the best day since I started school.' Inspectors agreed with the pupils that the current curriculum is a strength of the school.

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Strengthening leadership is providing a foundation for school improvement. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the recently restructured senior leadership team and governing body are taking action to address areas for development. Systems are in place for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress and, as a result, pupils are identified to receive additional support with their learning. The rigour of both the monitoring of teaching and learning, and use of data to monitor and respond to the attainment and progress of all pupils, is not yet consistently applied.

Up to 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 attainment in mathematics and science so that an increased proportion of children attain and exceed the nationally expected levels by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Raise the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, so that all pupils make good progress, by:
 - ensuring that lessons are well paced and time is used effectively
 - ensuring that activities planned for all pupils, particularly those of middle ability, are suitably challenging
 - marking pupils' work in all classes and sets to an equally good standard, so that pupils understand how to improve
 - involving pupils in all classes in reviewing their own learning and identifying next steps.
- Strengthen the procedures used by senior leaders to aid school improvement, by:
 - improving the rigour of systems to monitor and respond to the quality of teaching and learning
 - using data management systems more effectively to identify the relative attainment and progress of all groups of pupils across the school to ensure that the needs of all pupils are well met.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils have a sound understanding of right and wrong and their spiritual and cultural awareness is well developed and supported through resources, such as the variety of reading books, and through the broad curriculum. Pupils are proud to contribute to school life, taking responsibility for younger children, by acting as prefects, VIPs or being on the school council. Significant contributions are made to local events, such as singing to the retired, participating in competitions, events and supporting charities. Pupils have a strong desire to help those less fortunate than themselves locally, such as collecting Christmas gifts for children in Medway hospital or supporting the earthquake relief programme for Haiti. The vast majority of pupils enjoy school, behave well and report feeling safe and secure, knowing that there is always someone in school they can turn to. Excellent attendance and punctuality, mature social skills and good literacy, coupled with appropriate levels of competence in mathematics and use of computers, ensure pupils are well prepared for their next steps in life.

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A significant proportion of pupils engage enthusiastically in breakfast club and the range of after-school clubs that are offered. Although many pupils benefit from the school's strength in sport, some pupils felt the school would be further improved by offering clubs at lunchtimes and by increasing non-sport-related clubs. Pupils understand the importance of healthy eating as well as keeping fit. This was demonstrated through conversations with inspectors at lunchtimes when pupils discussed fruit snacks, healthy school lunches (which they enjoy) and what they have in their packed lunches.

The pattern of pupils' achievements over the last three years has been inconsistent. Current attainment in Key Stage 1 is just above the national average in reading, average in writing and above average in mathematics. At Key Stage 2, attainment is well above average in English, and broadly average in mathematics and science. Lesson observations and assessment information show that pupils throughout the school make better progress in mathematics at Key Stage 1 and in English at Key Stage 2. Gaps observed in knowledge and skills in science are now being addressed through the teaching of science as a separate subject. Assessment information has been accurately used to identify older pupils who have not made expected progress through the school, and additional support is in place to enable them to make up this lost ground. All groups of pupils make at least satisfactory progress during their lessons, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and some groups of pupils make good progress and attain well. However, due to inconsistencies, achievement is judged to be satisfactory overall.

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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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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How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. All teaching observed during the inspection was at least satisfactory and a majority was good. In some lessons observed, teachers did not use strategies to ensure all pupils took an active part in learning. Questioning was used well by some teachers to encourage young pupils to revisit and strengthen arguments they were constructing. However, in other lessons, pupils were not challenged to improve their answers. Marking in pupils' books is variable throughout the school, only sometimes giving pupils opportunities to reflect on and improve aspects of their work.

Pupils' learning is now benefiting greatly from the improved curriculum, which draws a range of subjects together and offers many opportunities for pupils to practise basic skills. All lessons are well planned and provide good opportunities for pupils to experience working as individuals, pairs, groups or as a whole class. Additional experiences and opportunities, such as residential trips and visits, music, drama and sporting opportunities, enhance this curriculum further.

Good and sensitive support is provided, both in the classroom and in withdrawal groups, for pupils who are vulnerable. Parents and carers commented positively on the quality of care and support shown to them as well as to their children. Relationships amongst pupils and all adults were seen to be positive, and Year 1 pupils were clearly excited when it was their turn to read to the volunteer helper. The environment supports learning; displays are bright, relevant to current topics, and celebrate pupils' work well.

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 newly extended senior leadership team is providing a strong sense of purpose and direction for the school. Their differing areas of expertise complement and support each other well, as some members are newly appointed to this position. Senior and middle leaders now have clear roles and responsibilities, and staff are working towards shared goals. Since the last inspection, more distributive systems and practices for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning have been established, but they have not been in place long enough to demonstrate impact on standards.

The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory overall and it fulfils its statutory responsibilities, including ensuring that safeguarding procedures are in place. The current Chair of the Governing Body demonstrates a deep understanding of the role of governance and ways to promote further school improvement. The governing body has also recently been reorganised, taking a more streamlined approach, with two sub-

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committees covering the full range of responsibilities. There are a number of vacancies on the governing body which are now being filled.

Overall, the school has very good relationships with parents and carers, sharing information via the website, newsletters, updates and consultations. A small minority of parents and carers said that they were not given enough advance warning for special events and activities, and the school is addressing this through improved communication systems.

Strong partnership working with a range of agencies is a positive feature of the school, with the church having a particularly high and supportive profile. Community cohesion is good, being well developed in the immediate school environment and in countries far away. The school also works well with local organisations and businesses, but considers even more links could be made. Although the school is committed to equal opportunity, and tackles any discrimination appropriately, it does not yet fully evaluate the performance of identifiable groups.

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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
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

Experienced, qualified teaching assistants and dedicated teachers support children's learning well by providing a variety of purposeful and stimulating activities within a welcoming environment. Children enter Reception with skills at or just above those expected for their age; by the time they start Year 1, attainment is above national expectations. Although attainment in writing is above national expectations, it remains an area of focus for further improvement.

The outside area has been significantly improved since the last inspection with children and parents and carers involved in planning the improvements for which a local

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organisation provided significant funding. Staff routinely make incidental and focused observations of children as they play and during teacher-led activities so that next steps and children's preferences can be taken into account when planning. While there is a good balance between child-initiated and teacher-led activities, there are missed opportunities for cross-area links, particularly in the outside learning area. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed by a dedicated leader who believes strongly in the uniqueness of every child. Relationships with parents and carers are strong.

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 and carers who responded to the questionnaire say that their child enjoys school, is safe and are pleased with the education that their child receives. Many made favourable comments such as: 'My son loves school and is thriving here in all aspects, not just academic.' A very small minority of parents and carers, however, felt that they did not receive as much information as they would like about their child's progress, or that their child was not significantly challenged. Inspectors found during this inspection that higher- and lower-ability pupils' needs were well met, but that pupils of middle ability could be challenged further. Systems for sharing information about pupils' progress were found to be in place. A minority of parents and carers felt their concerns were not always well listened to and the school was not well led and managed; however, during the inspection, leadership and management were found to be satisfactory.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 135 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 405 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	87	64	40	30	7	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	80	59	50	37	5	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	43	32	79	59	12	9	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	37	67	50	16	12	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	57	42	71	53	7	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	50	37	68	50	15	11	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	43	74	55	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)	51	38	64	47	15	11	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	36	71	53	12	9	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	34	70	52	11	8	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	33	62	46	23	17	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	34	25	63	47	28	21	6	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	64	47	61	45	8	6	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 all 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



20 January 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Mary's Island Church of England (Aided) Primary School,
Chatham ME4 3ST**

Thank you so much for the welcome you gave to inspectors when we visited your school. It was good to have the opportunity to meet and talk to so many of you and to look at your work. We could see that your school takes very good care of you all and provides you with a satisfactory and improving education. Many things impressed us, including your good and caring behaviour, your enthusiasm for learning and the fact that nearly all of you get to school on time every day!

You have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy and you know the importance of keeping safe. You get on well and work well together, and show thoughtfulness for those less fortunate than yourselves. You raise a lot of money for charity and think of ways to help others. Nearly everyone said they enjoy school and lots of you attend one of the after-school clubs or breakfast club. You told inspectors how much you enjoy the creative curriculum; the inspectors agreed with you that it is good.

To help your school improve, we have asked the headteacher to help you make even better progress in lessons by making sure that all of you are challenged to do your best in all subjects, no matter what your abilities are. We also asked that you are helped to reflect on your own learning, and that when teachers mark your work, it is easy for you to understand how well you have done and what you need to do next to make even more progress. All of you can help, too, by continuing to always try your best, and by talking to your teachers and each other about what you are learning. A few of you told us that you sometimes find work too easy; if this is how you feel, it is important to tell your teacher.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald

Her Majesty's Inspector

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