

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Portbury

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109272
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	356514
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2010
Reporting inspector	David Carrington

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	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rebecca Ogden
Headteacher	Carole Sharp
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed eight lessons led by four teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, school staff and the governors. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school planning, assessment data, samples of pupils' work, the school's monitoring of the quality of teaching and a number of policy documents. The team received 41 questionnaires from parents and carers and also evaluated those from school staff and the pupils.

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

- Improvements being made to the provision in mathematics, especially to enable higher attainers reach their full potential.
- Developments in the promotion of community cohesion to ensure it is as effective as other areas of leadership.
- The effectiveness of partnerships with parents and carers in helping their children make at least good progress.
- The strengthening of the use of assessment to support learning as a powerful system to accelerate achievement and raise standards further.

Information about the school

St Mary's is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic groups and all pupils speak English as their main language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Most of these pupils have behavioural, emotional or social difficulties or speech and language needs.

The school has been awarded Healthy Schools and Investors in People status and has been awarded the Activemark.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Mary's C of E Primary is a good school. It has a number of outstanding features, including pupils' first-class behaviour, the wide-ranging curriculum and the high quality of care, guidance and support. Under the expert leadership of the headteacher, staff and members of the governing body have formed an effective team with good expectations, obvious ambition and well-focused drive for improvement. The team have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses due to the robust monitoring and evaluation and progress tracking systems in place. Improvement has been good in recent years, as seen in the effective provision now made for Reception children and in their accelerating progress. The good partnership with parents and carers is another significant improvement. The capacity to maintain improvement is good.

Pupils' attainment is above average. There are occasional differences in attainment in different subjects. The dip in attainment in mathematics two years ago has been corrected so that pupils' achievement in the subject is now good. Pupils, including the higher attainers, make good progress throughout the school. This is an important improvement, as in the past, progress was inconsistent from class to class. The quickening pace of progress is due to the good quality of teaching. Indeed, some outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection and pupils' books show evidence that this is to be found at other times too. The use of assessment to support learning is good, although there are inconsistencies in its effectiveness because the best practice is not yet found in all classes and subjects. The resolve to remove this inconsistency is good.

The pupils are thoughtful, kind and caring. They enjoy very good relationships with staff and other pupils. They want to do their best and are proud of their many successes. Pupils have full understanding of how to keep safe. Their contribution to the local community and those overseas is excellent. They do not yet, however, have the same opportunities to work with others from communities wider afield in the United Kingdom, which means the promotion of community cohesion is good rather than outstanding. Very noticeable features of the pupils are their reflective thinking, initiative and innovative ideas. They have evaluated the characteristics necessary for outstanding teaching, for example, which has been influential in helping staff improve their practice.

Partnerships with outside agencies and other schools are outstanding. This enables the school to provide opportunities that would otherwise be difficult due to its small size. Provision and pupils' outstanding achievement in sport, music, art and drama are examples of how such partnerships support a first class curriculum.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the use of assessment to support learning is of consistent high quality by:

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- sharing best practice
- using pupils' good ideas for creating a well-balanced dialogue about their progress
- making sure there are always sufficient opportunities for pupils to talk to each other about how well they are learning
- ensuring that the comments written in pupils' books, especially mathematics, identify what has been learned and what is the next step
- creating high quality visual displays of pupils' achievement.
- Strengthen the promotion of community cohesion over the next year by:
 - giving pupils ample opportunity to meet and work alongside people from other communities in the United Kingdom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils make good progress from the time they join Reception. Their attainment increases well, so it is above average in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave for secondary school. Their books show good consistency in the progress made through the year. For example, the writing books of the mixed age Year 5/6 class show successful focus by the teacher on improved punctuation, spelling, handwriting and, importantly, the expressiveness of writing. The pupils responded well to the ideas shared with them in this way and it is very evident how they have striven to improve their skills.

Mathematics achievement has been a particular focus for improvement. It has been developed well. The innovative approaches adopted, for example the teaching of higher attaining girls in separate groups from the boys, have borne fruit in increased progress made by the pupils. Lesson observations show that pupils work productively and purposefully and that there is often vibrancy in learning that ensures progress is very brisk. The group of higher attaining Year 5/6 boys thoroughly enjoyed solving very complex and challenging problems in their outstanding quality mathematics lesson. In a spontaneous way, they used algebraic reasoning to piece together clues to help analyse the multi-step problems. There was ample opportunity to talk about their effective strategies and false moves. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress too. Well-tailored support ensures their learning is systematic and focused on the necessary small steps.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is not yet outstanding because of the lesser emphasis on the understanding of other cultures. Nevertheless, pupils reflect carefully on the special qualities of things they meet and their moral and social development is very carefully nurtured. Pupils show great enjoyment of school and are keen to share their very sensible ideas for its improvement. They develop the independence, collaborative skills and self-reliance necessary to help them meet the challenges of the next step in their education with confidence and success.

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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	2
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	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	2
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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is effective because the staff have good expectations of the pupils' behaviour, effort and progress. The pupils recognise this. They say they are successful in their work because their teachers are 'fair, firm and fun'. Lessons almost all go at a brisk pace, are packed with practical activity and are well planned to provide challenges for pupils in all attainment groups. Less obviously consistent is the degree to which pupils' ideas are captured through discussion of the achievement of their targets. When asked, pupils talk capably of what they find easy and what is difficult. Not all the displays in classrooms celebrate the achievement of pupils' targets explicitly, although the staff are considering ways to illustrate pupils' achievement visually as well as verbally. They are also seeking to improve the effectiveness of marking so that in mathematics as much as English, the comments identify what has been achieved and what remains for improvement.

The curriculum is planned thoroughly so that subject links are used to develop themes that fully support the development of basic skills. Information and communication technology, for example, is used in many subjects to underpin pupils' achievement such as in the use of computer design programs to assist detailed and precise artwork. In Years 3 and 4, the religious education theme of the story of Rama and Sita was used effectively to help pupils show empathy with different characters' emotions in their writing. The curriculum makes a very strong contribution to pupils' personal, social and health education.

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The very thorough care, guidance and support provided for all pupils are an obvious strength. Pupils with barriers to learning are helped to make good progress by the careful nurturing of their interests, imaginations and skills. Thus, pupils with behavioural, emotional or social difficulties or speech and language needs are supported effectively in lessons by their teaching assistants. This encourages them to aim for success and to make good progress.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Significant among the school's recent improvement has been the quest for consistency in the quality of provision and pupils' achievement. Although some aspects of its work remain priorities for continuous improvement, such as the use of assessment to support learning and the promotion of community cohesion, the base-line of quality is good. In some features, the school has achieved outstanding quality. All this is a mark of the headteacher's tenacity and the collective ambition and drive to improve. Members of the governing body subscribe to the same good expectations and aspirations as the staff. They are increasingly probing in their evaluation of the school's effectiveness and are ready to investigate the data on pupils' progress in greater depth.

The school meets its obligations to ensure all pupils are thoroughly safeguarded. The pupils report that staff are quick to identify and eliminate risks. Generally, policies and procedures are based on up-to-date guidance and reflect the need to be watchful, well trained and active in maintaining a secure, risk-free site.

Parents and carers typically hold very positive views of the school, and are of the view that it helps them support their children's learning effectively. The school provides good opportunities for parents and carers to be involved both in social events and those focused on their children's achievements.

School leaders and members of the governing body have ensured pupils all have equal opportunities to succeed. This has been strengthened by the fact that pupils now make consistently good progress in their learning. No adult in school tolerates discrimination of any form and the school meets all statutory requirements to this effect. Occasional squabbles between pupils are sorted quickly and resolutely. The pupils themselves work and play in great harmony and friendship, whatever their backgrounds.

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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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Within the last three years, the school has improved the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The inside and outdoor areas are used with imagination to fire the Reception children's enthusiasm for learning. The children are confident to explore all activities and areas, whether guided by an adult or on their own. Their knowledge and understanding of healthy lifestyles, for example, are being promoted well by the choices they make of what to grow in their gardens. Staff question, support and advise effectively to ensure learning is successful and fun.

The children are making good progress in their development of skills and knowledge. At the start of their Reception Year, the level of skills and knowledge is broadly as expected. By the end of Reception, nearly all reach the levels expected and a significant number go beyond this. These improvements in outcomes are due in part to the children's enjoyment of school. During one lesson observed, the children thoroughly enjoyed dancing to Indian music, playing drums and other percussion instruments as they did so. They all looked the part in their Indian costumes and swayed rhythmically. They talked confidently of Diwali, their Diva lamps and their magical bus that was transporting them to India.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader recognises that outside, there is little shelter from bad weather. This means some activities may be truncated when it rains and, therefore, less effective in helping children build the necessary skills in all six areas of learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Improvement is at the heart of the leader's work. Assessment, for example, has been honed into an evaluative tool that enables the staff to match activities precisely to children's academic and personal needs. The 'Learning Journey' books for each child graphically illustrate the good progress being made as a result of this match.

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

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

With approval ratings in excess of 90 per cent for twelve of the thirteen areas on the parents' and carers' questionnaire, it is clear that views are very positive. This is underpinned by the fairly high response from parents and carers. There were both positive comments and those showing concern on the questionnaires returned. However, concerns were not widespread. Some were focused on difficulties of communication with the school, including the quality of feedback on their children's progress. The evidence from inspection suggests that improvements have been made on these matters and that these contribute well to the good partnership with parents and carers. Most comments were positive, including those on the positive management of behaviour and its result. The vast majority of parents and carers think their children flourish at St Mary's. Children's good academic and personal development progress supports this belief.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's C of E 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.

Inspection team received 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 101 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	76	10	24	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	68	13	32	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	41	23	56	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	46	22	54	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	49	20	49	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	56	16	39	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	56	18	44	0	0	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)	16	39	21	51	2	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	56	17	41	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	32	18	44	4	10	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	46	13	32	3	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	19	46	16	39	3	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	66	13	32	0	0	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 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. 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.



8 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's C of E Primary School, Bristol BS20 7TR

Thank you for being so helpful, thoughtful and friendly when we visited your school recently. We were impressed by your very sensible ideas about improvements for your school and your excellent behaviour. In our full report, we have judged that you go to a good school. Your parents and carers told us this too, and you are clearly proud to be at St Mary's.

When we looked at your books and visited your lessons we saw that you are making good progress and that your attainment is above average. This is because you are taught well. You told us that this is because your teachers are 'fair, firm and fun' and we agree with you. Much of your work is exciting, interesting and very enjoyable, which shows just how good your curriculum is.

We think you do well at school because you are looked after very well and because your teachers expect you to work hard and behave well. The leaders of your school have made good improvements to your education and are ready to make two particular things even better:

- You could be given more opportunities to find out about different people's lives in other parts of this country.
- Your teachers could give you more chances to tell them about how well you think you are learning.

We know you will have some good ideas to help make these improvements. To start, you could share your thoughts about how you can make your classrooms show how well you are reaching your targets.

Yours sincerely

David Carrington

Lead inspector

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