

St Mary's CofE Foundation Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115269
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	379051
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Ted Wheatley

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	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracey Harrison
Headteacher	Christine Tonkins
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who saw 12 lessons taught by seven teachers. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body and pupils, and inspectors spoke to some parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation about pupils' progress and policies, particularly those for safeguarding, as well as school development planning and evidence of self-evaluation. They considered 60 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- How effectively is teaching narrowing the gap in progress between different groups of pupils?
- How effective are the school's efforts to improve attainment in pupils' writing?
- How well is the Early Years Foundation Stage working to improve children's progress, especially to give children a good foundation in writing.

Information about the school

St Mary's Church of England Primary is smaller than the average primary school, but is growing rapidly in size and is due to move into new buildings in summer 2012. The great majority of pupils come from White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is broadly average, and a small number is at the early stages of learning English. The other languages spoken are Portuguese, Bangladeshi and Urdu. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. A slightly higher than average proportion of pupils joins the school during the year. The school has been awarded the Active Mark.

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 Church of England Primary School provides a satisfactory standard of education. It is an improving school and has strengths in how well it engages parents and carers in supporting pupils' learning. Relationships with families are good and the school provides them with good personal support. Most parents and carers are pleased with the school. One wrote, 'the school is warm and welcoming, and this has given my child great confidence'. Parents and carers also recognise that the school has experienced changes recently and this has contributed to improvements.

Pupils' attainment is average overall, and improving after a period in which it fell, especially at Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2, attainment is above average in mathematics. Attainment is broadly average in English, but pulled down by weaknesses in writing. The school is at the early stages of dealing with these issues, and there is some improvement in pupils' writing skills. Handwriting is frequently untidy and spelling inaccurate. Pupils do not produce enough prolonged writing to enable them to write with enough fluency and independence. Numeracy skills are good, and pupils understand the mathematical processes they use in calculations and solving numerical problems. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall, and is starting to improve. While there is occasional slow progress, there are no significant differences between different groups of pupils. Generally, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. In Reception, children's progress is unsatisfactory, and action has been taken to reverse this.

Satisfactory and improving teaching is leading to improvements in progress and attainment. The best lessons are based on teachers' use of accurate assessment information to match work to pupils' learning needs. In these lessons work is challenging, with marking that tells pupils how well they are doing, what they need to do next, and how to improve their work. Occasionally, inaccurate assessments lead to work not matched to pupils' learning needs. Sometimes teachers' marking is infrequent and lacks direction for improvement or the next steps in learning and occasionally there are no checks on whether pupils follow guidance. In some lessons, teachers model good writing, and insist that pupils produce their best writing at all times. The curriculum provides a secure range of subjects, although there are too few opportunities in all subjects to promote improvement in pupils' writing skills. There is a good range of well supported out-of-school activities. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, assessment is inaccurate and work is not always matched closely to children's needs. Activities are not always purposeful, and planning, to ensure all

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areas of the early years' curriculum are covered, is insecure.

The great majority of pupils enjoy school and attendance levels are above average. Pupils mostly behave well. As a rule pupils feel safe and although they report that there is some bullying, they also say it is dealt with well. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and understand that a balanced diet is essential, along with regular physical exercise. They are considerate towards each other, and carry out their school and church responsibilities well.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is satisfactory. The school has accurately identified the areas it needs to improve and the headteacher provides sound direction for development. After several staff changes and the new appointment of a deputy head from January 2012 to assume some senior leadership responsibilities, the school has suitable strategies in place to promote more rapid progress in Key Stage 1 and in writing, assessment and teaching. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is currently inadequate, but newly-appointed staff, with support from senior leaders, now provides a secure base for improvement. The governing body challenges the school, and has been particularly active in pushing forward plans to improve writing skills and early years' provision. Given these are early stages of progress in most areas of the school's work, the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

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 levels of attainment in writing by ensuring pupils:
 - frequently produce extended pieces of written work in all subjects
 - spell accurately
 - take pride in always producing neat handwriting.

- Improve teaching by ensuring:
 - assessment is accurate, and collated into a record that enables all staff to see how well pupils make progress
 - work is always matched to pupils' learning needs
 - marking is frequent, with details of how well pupils perform, what they need to do next, and there is follow-up to ensure pupils take advice given
 - teachers model good quality writing.

- Improve outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring:
 - children's progress is accurately recorded and evaluated so that work is tailored to their individual needs
 - work is purposeful and covers all of the foundation stage areas of learning

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- fully record and celebrate children’s acquisition of skills
- provide an action plan for developing the leadership of the early years foundation stage.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children begin school with skills that are broadly in line with expectations. They make unsatisfactory progress in Reception and enter Year 1 with skills below those expected for their age. By Year 6, pupils speak and read well. They have a wide vocabulary and speak confidently. They have a wide range of numeracy skills which they apply well to mathematical problems. They explain their mathematical thinking well, and in some detail. For example, in a lesson on multiplying decimal numbers, pupils independently chose strategies to help them estimate final answers. They carried out final calculations carefully, fully explaining how they completed the calculation, and reached their answers. Most pupils write competently, and the quality of punctuation is improving fast. For example, in a lesson, starting with writing and punctuation exercises and discussion about accuracy of punctuation, pupils rapidly learned how to punctuate accurately and to evaluate their own work for presentation. However, throughout the school there are instances of careless spelling and untidy handwriting, which are exacerbated by much writing done in a rough format where the expectation for accuracy is low. As a result, many pupils do not produce enough independent, lengthy writing. Pupils’ progress in mathematics and reading is good. In writing their progress is satisfactory and is improving slowly.

Most pupils enjoy school, like learning and behave well; the occasional unacceptable behaviour by a small number of pupils is managed effectively and does not interrupt learning. Pupils carry out any responsibilities they are given well. For example, they help give out and collect equipment in lessons, older pupils help younger pupils, others raise money for charities and many are active in supporting the local church in the main festivals it celebrates. Most pupils take part in out-of-school physical activities, and the school has gained the Active Mark award for this. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, with pupils gradually gaining understanding, knowledge and respect for cultures beyond Britain and the rest of Europe.

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

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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The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Lessons often match pupils' interests and engage them well in learning. In the best lessons, teaching is challenging and work is matched closely to pupils' learning needs. For example, in a Key Stage 1 lesson on writing instructions, pupils wrote and tested out instructions to make Chinese lanterns. They were encouraged to write grammatically correct sentences and this led to good progress in developing their writing skills. Despite teachers' focus on improving pupils' writing skills, high expectations of neat writing and accurate spelling are not always shared strongly enough with pupils, and good writing practice is not modelled effectively. Teachers carry out accurate assessments in most classes, but in a few lessons work does not fully meet pupils' needs, and their attention wanders a little. For the most part teachers' questioning is good and encourages pupils to explore and consolidate their own understanding. Teachers' marking usually informs pupils of the levels they are working at, and how to make further progress, but this is not consistent, and sometimes the intervals, between pieces of marked work, are too long. In addition, teachers do not always check that pupils have carried out corrections or improved their work.

The organisation of the curriculum is satisfactory and there is a good range of links between subjects. Computers are used increasingly to support learning in other subjects and to develop pupils' information and communication technology skills. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to reinforce their writing skills in all subjects. The curriculum is supported by a sound range of visits, links with local business and schools, and with the local church. Links to encourage cultural awareness are improving. For example, the school has a link with a school in France, and an Indian dance group has visited the school.

Links with external agencies are good, and are successful in supporting those pupils whose challenging circumstances may make them vulnerable. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory and improving as assessment becomes increasingly more accurate and is used to plan suitable work for pupils. Transfer arrangements between home, nurseries and secondary schools are good. Procedures to encourage regular attendance are effective, and the school

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is now working to improve the punctuality of a small number of pupils. Pupils joining the school during the year are well supported. Pupils attending the breakfast club are well cared for.

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 a clear view of how the school should improve, and with the support of the governing body, has pushed through many initiatives. Changes in other leadership roles are intended to bring improvements to writing and early years, but are still in the early stages of their development and have not yet shown any significant improvements. Leaders have established a whole school approach to accurate assessment and recording pupils' performance; this has been an important factor in pushing through improvements in teaching. Governance is satisfactory; the governing body is well-informed about the school and seeks parents' and carers, and staff views of the school. The school engages parents and carers effectively in supporting pupils' learning. Attendance at consultation evenings is very high, parents and carers are encouraged to visit the school and teachers are accessible to parents and carers at the start and end of the day. The school provides opportunities for parents and carers to find out about how their children learn in literacy and numeracy. Partnerships with other schools, the church, and external services are satisfactory in promoting pupils' learning and well-being.

Safeguarding requirements are met, although some recording issues and day-to-day practices were resolved at the time of the inspection. Promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory and the gap between different groups of pupils and between subjects is narrowing. Procedures to eliminate all forms of discrimination are good and are well established in the ethos of the school. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory overall. It is good within school and the local community, and the school is improving in its efforts to ensure pupils have a good understanding of the traditions and cultures of people around the world.

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

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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	2
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	3
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

Children do not make the progress they should, especially in their literacy and numeracy skills. When adults work with small groups of children, children's learning is satisfactory. For example, children developed basic number work in one group, while an individual child close to the group, learned how to form the letters of his name. However, children are sometimes very noisy and run from one activity to another; they do not sustain concentration for very long unless adults work with them. Children are friendly and get on well together and welcome discussion with adults. Activities often lack purpose, mainly because assessment is not accurate, although it is improving. Learning journeys records are at an early stage of development and do not give a full picture of how well children acquire skills in all areas of learning. There are too few opportunities for early writing activities to ensure that children make good progress. However, when given the opportunity, children cooperate in trying to make lists. For example, 'Father Christmas's helpers' took orders for Christmas presents, and when asked to, made writing marks on paper. Relationships between adults and children are good, and children's welfare is sound. The inside and outside learning areas are not always fully used to widen children's learning experiences. The outdoor learning area is inadequate but it is safe when supervised. Improvements have not been planned because of the anticipated school's relocation. The school has a satisfactory view of what action needs to be taken and has started to make inroads into improving provision. A new member of staff has been appointed and new leadership arrangements provide suitable direction and support for improvements.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

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Views of parents and carers

Just over half of parents and carers returned the questionnaire and most were positive and support the school. A small proportion of parents and carers felt the school does not deal with unacceptable behaviour well enough. However, inspectors saw mainly good behaviour, and where there was occasional unacceptable behaviour, it was dealt with well and did not interrupt learning. A very small number were concerned about bullying incidents. Inspectors found that the school responded well to these, dealing with them in confidence where necessary. A very small proportion of parents and carers commented that their children were not supported or challenged enough. Inspectors found occasions when this was the case, but also judged that the situation is improving.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's CofE Foundation 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 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 168 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	62	19	32	2	3	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	41	68	16	27	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	27	45	33	55	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	48	28	47	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	52	28	47	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	26	43	31	52	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	43	29	48	5	8	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)	25	42	27	45	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	26	43	28	47	6	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	33	30	50	3	5	4	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	37	30	50	3	5	3	5
The school is led and managed effectively	31	52	23	38	4	7	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	33	55	24	40	3	5	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



5 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Foundation Primary School, Stansted CM24 8JP

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we came to your school. We judged your school to be satisfactory. You make satisfactory progress, which continues to improve. The following things are particular strengths of the school.

- Some teaching is good. Most lessons are interesting and there are trips and activities to make learning enjoyable.
- The headteacher, staff and governors work hard to make sure improvement continues.
- You say you feel safe, and you know who to go to if you are worried.
- Most of you behave well, and your attendance is good.
- You know that following a healthy diet and doing lots of exercise makes sure you stay healthy.
- Those of you who have responsibilities carry them out well.
- The school takes good care of you and ensures you are safe.

In order for the school to be even better, we have asked your teachers to make sure that:

- you produce lengthy pieces of writing regularly in all subjects, spell accurately and write neatly
- your progress is assessed accurately so that work is always planned to be challenging; marking tells you how well you are doing and how to improve; teachers make sure you follow any guidance given, and they show you how to write well so that you produce good work yourself
- the progress of children in Reception is accurately recorded so that work is always carefully matched to their needs, staff keep individual learning journeys to show how well children make progress, and, make sure leaders are well supported in pushing through improvements.

You can all help by making sure you produce lengthy pieces of writing when you can, spell accurately and write neatly, and follow advice given in marking.

Yours sincerely

Ted Wheatley
Lead inspector

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