

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Castle Street, Saffron Walden, CB10 1BQ

Inspection dates 21–22 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Teaching is good. Teachers know their pupils well and are passionate about helping them to do their best. As a result, pupils make good progress.
- Pupils are polite to one another and relate well to adults in the school. They enjoy their lessons and behave well.
- Pupils who are at risk of not doing well make good progress because the school gives them the good-quality extra help they need.
- Pupils have good opportunities to practise their reading. Reading standards are consistently above average.
- Pupils who are eligible for free school meals benefit from additional government-funded support and their progress is now good.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility, for example as members of the school council, and take great pride in what they do.
- Senior managers make good use of data on pupils' progress in a relentless drive towards higher standards.
- Parents greatly appreciate what the school does for their children, especially in helping them to become confident young people.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The work is not always challenging enough for the most able pupils.
- Teachers do not always do enough to help pupils to become independent learners. Pupils are not involved sufficiently in assessing their own work.
- Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to develop pupils' creative skills.

Information about this inspection

- Every teacher was seen teaching, and a total of ten lessons or parts of lessons were visited. Three lessons were observed jointly with senior staff. The inspector heard pupils read, and looked at their books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, and with groups of staff and pupils. Conversations were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, with a representative of the local authority, and with an adviser working closely with the school.
- The inspector took account of the views of the 47 parents who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View), several of whom also wrote letters in support of their responses. The inspector met with parents when they brought their children to school in the morning and took account of responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents provided by the school, including data showing tracking of pupils' progress, policies and minutes of meetings, the school's self-evaluation, and documents associated with child protection and safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

David Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average primary school.
- Except in Year 6, pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- A few children join or leave the school other than at the usual time. As a result, the proportion of boys and girls in each year group varies considerably from year to year.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school receives additional government funding (the pupil premium) for these pupils.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The extensive grounds are also home to The Pavilion, which houses St Mary's pre-school and Oliver's Lodge Breakfast and After School Clubs. These facilities are inspected separately.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - planning lessons to reflect more closely the needs of pupils of all abilities, including the most able
 - increasing the opportunity for pupils to work in pairs or small groups, and to help them to take responsibility for their own learning by evaluating their own and each other's work
 - extending opportunities for pupils to take part in creative activities in lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils typically start in the Reception Year with skills and knowledge that are below the levels expected for their age. In response to good and sometimes excellent teaching, they make rapid progress so that, by the time they join Year 1, they are doing as well as expected for their age.
- By the end of Year 2, most middle ability and higher ability pupils have made the progress expected in relation to their starting point in English. However, the standards reached by the more-able pupils are slightly below expectation.
- Data from 2012 showed that in Year 2 many more pupils reached National Curriculum Level 2a in mathematics than do so nationally, but fewer reached Level 3. However, the small numbers of pupils in each year group make it difficult to draw reliable comparisons, and school data suggests that more pupils will reach higher levels in 2013.
- From Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 in 2012, all pupils progressed at least as well as expected in reading and in writing. The number achieving more than expected progress was also greater than the national figure.
- In mathematics, the number making expected progress was above the national figure, but fewer exceeded expectation. National data show that, in this year group, less-able pupils in Year 3 made most progress in Key Stage 2, whilst the most able tended to do less well. The school's own data indicates that pupils are on track to exceed the national figure for those making better than expected progress in 2013.
- Rigorous tracking of progress for all pupils is followed up by support for those at risk of falling behind. Those known to be eligible for free school meals are well supported by the pupil premium and often do rather better than their classmates. In 2012, these pupils were more than a term ahead of their classmates in mathematics and nearly two terms ahead in English.
- Standards in reading are above average. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the reading sessions that take place after lunch each day. Pupils in Year 2 read fluently and usually accurately and nearly all of them also say that they enjoy reading at home. By Year 6, pupils have discovered the joy of reading and use their skills in all aspects of their work.
- From the Reception Year upwards, pupils develop their information and communications technology (ICT) skills appropriately for their age.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported in small groups. Their progress is just as rapid as that of their peers, and sometimes more so, so that they catch up with their classmates.

The quality of teaching is good

- Parents comment that the quality of their children's education has improved dramatically over the last few years. This view is supported by the observations made during the inspection, in which all teaching was good or better.
- In Reception and in the Year 2/3 class, the high quality of interactions between pupils and

teachers lead to a very purposeful approach to learning in which pupils' ideas are greatly valued. A fast pace in a Year 2/3 phonics (the sounds made by letters and words) lesson kept pupils on their toes and led to excellent learning.

- In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils were to interpret information about football scores. The context gave the task a relevance that appealed to pupils, and led to a high level of involvement for them. In the same way, a science lesson about melting ice had pupils excited, both in the practical part of the lesson, and in the recording and interpretation of data.
- Pupils who find the work difficult are well supported by lessons specifically targeted at their needs. This support removes misconceptions, and leads to better progress.
- Lessons typically begin with a session in which pupils sit close to the teacher and engage in a discussion in which they recap the outcomes from the previous lesson. They are then told what they are about to do. Excellent questioning by the teacher helps them to think carefully about the task, and enables the teacher to decide whether they all have the necessary background information to begin. In some lessons, this introduction continues for too long, and pupils begin to lose interest.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to learning in all lessons because they have discussed the lesson with the teacher beforehand and understand exactly what pupils are to learn. In discussion, pupils emphasise that all adults in the school 'are really nice' and help them to learn well.
- Throughout the school, tasks capture pupils' enthusiasm; for example, in a lesson in which pupils were to write a poem modelled on an example read out by the teacher at the start of the lesson. This was a challenging task, which developed pupils' ability to write creatively and to think carefully about what they had written. Opportunities to use pupils' creativity to improve their concentration in this way are occasionally missed.
- Teachers mark pupils' work carefully, and include comments about how they can improve their work and progress to the next level. They give pupils time to consider the comments, and to act upon them. Informal discussion during lessons helps teachers to judge their pupils' progress and provides valuable information to inform the planning of the next day's work. Opportunities are occasionally missed for pupils to mark their own work or that of their classmates, against criteria set out by the teacher.
- The most able pupils contribute well to the quality of learning by other pupils in joint work but, for them, the challenge provided by classroom activities is not always demanding enough.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils say they greatly enjoy coming to school. Their attendance is high. They are proud of their school and do everything they can to maintain positive relationships born of responsible consideration for others.
- Pupils are helpful and courteous with one another, with staff and with other adults around the school. Behaviour in the dining hall is exemplary, and there was no evidence to support the very few parents and staff who reported that behaviour is not managed well enough.
- Bullying and other oppressive behaviour is extremely rare, but what there is is swiftly dealt with and resolved amicably. The school keeps detailed records of any incidents that do occur.

- No instances of the use of derogatory language were noted in the school's behaviour log, nor was any heard around the school during the inspection. Pupils treat their surroundings with respect.
- Exclusions are extremely rare and used only where all other avenues have been exhausted.
- The governors, and staff at all levels, work with tremendous unity of purpose to ensure that pupils are safe. Their response is extremely swift if anything untoward should occur. Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school, and their parents are confident that they are well looked after.
- Pupils enjoy their work and engage in lively discussions with their teachers and with their classmates. They enjoy opportunities to be creative; for example, when writing poetry or contributing to the design of a science experiment. They would like to be given more opportunities to express their creativity.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and her senior colleagues are committed to raising the quality of education provided by the school. One parent said: 'I think St Mary's has come an incredibly long way under the headteacher's leadership.'
- Arrangements to evaluate the school's work are good and include procedures to consider the quality of teaching that are affirmed by an external adviser. Teachers' pay is linked to robust performance management, and professional development is based on identified needs. Teachers observe one another teach, and know what they have to do to improve, based on national teaching standards. Governors monitor the impact of professional development on pupils' progress in line with the school's ambitious aims.
- Teachers assess each pupil's progress meticulously. Leaders make sure that any pupils who are in danger of falling behind are well supported.
- Parents greatly appreciate the way they are kept informed about their children's progress. Pupils know that teachers will help them if they find the work difficult, until all barriers to learning are removed.
- Learning opportunities are firmly based on the need to develop reading and writing skills from the very start in the Reception Year. The emphasis on English and mathematics continues throughout the school; resulting in good and improving levels of achievement, and good behaviour, because pupils are interested in the work. They know that their teachers, whom they respect, are also interested in their learning.
- A good variety of additional activities extends the range of pupils' experiences. These include sporting and cultural activities, such as a visit to Audley End House, musical activities including performances locally, and residential visits. All these activities, including a daily act of collective worship, contribute effectively to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, as well as their enjoyment.
- The care and wellbeing of all its pupils are central to the school's work. The school works effectively to set up and promote strong and fruitful relationships with parents, including those that are hard to reach, and with care agencies and the police.

■ The school meets all statutory regulations in relation to child protection and safeguarding.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Since the time of the last inspection, the governing body has challenged the headteacher and staff to bring about much needed improvements. Focused training has enabled governors to challenge the headteacher about what needs to be done to improve teaching and learning even further. Governors know staff well, and contribute to the performance management of the headteacher. They visit the school regularly and know the work of its staff first hand. Astute financial management has enabled the school to create a very attractive and safe environment, and has supported changes that will result in an additional class next year. The pupil premium is deployed well, and the additional support it provides is already having an impact on learning for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The strengths of the school are becoming well known in the community and, for the first time in the coming academic year, applications exceed available places.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	115155
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	401495

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	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sandra Marsh
Headteacher	Surge Dhanda
Date of previous school inspection	14 December 2009
Telephone number	01799 523384
Fax number	01799 506384
Email address	info@st-maryscofe.essex.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', 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 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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 assesses 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 0300 123 4234, 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 information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

