

St Mary's Church of England Infant School, Marlborough

George Lane, Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 4BX

Inspection dates 19–20 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The school's leadership is outstanding. The determination of all leaders to secure outstanding teaching has been effective in ensuring that pupils of all abilities make rapid progress.
- Experienced governors regularly challenge and question leaders about how well pupils are doing. They offer very good support, thoroughly checking all aspects of the quality of teaching and how well pupils are achieving.
- Last year the school had a very high proportion of pupils with very complex needs. They made excellent progress, but attainment dipped in Year 2. This year they have already reached above average standards in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils is exceptionally well used and they make very good progress. Where these pupils do not have special educational needs, their attainment is similar to that of other pupils in the school. Their achievement is above that of other pupils nationally at the end of Year 2.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils with complex needs in the resource base is excellent. As a result, pupils' progress considerably exceeds expectations from their various starting points.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in the main school make excellent progress because they benefit from the same high quality leadership.
- Outstanding provision in the early years ensures that children enjoy stimulating activities and make a very confident start to school. As a result they make rapid progress, preparing them very well for Year 1.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Policies and procedures are rigorously applied and adhered to. Parents fully support this view, agreeing that pupils are very safe and well cared for.
- All pupils are eager to learn, and behave extremely well because teachers plan challenging and memorable experiences. Pupils' above average attendance reflects their enjoyment of school.
- Pupils' outstanding achievement is underpinned by the school's distinctive spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision. Pupils and adults alike demonstrate clearly the school's motto of 'be kind, be gentle and work hard' in all that they do.
- Very strong relationships are forged, characterised by a high level of trust and mutual respect throughout the whole school community.
- Parents shared with inspectors their great delight and satisfaction with the school. Many remarked upon the way all pupils are included in all that the school offers. Pupils are very well prepared for junior school.
- Some pupils do not demonstrate a strong understanding of the many different cultures that exist today in modern Britain.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors looked at learning in 16 lessons and saw the work of seven teachers. They were accompanied for some classroom visits by the headteacher. Teaching assistants were seen working with individual pupils and small groups. Inspectors attended an assembly, talked to pupils about their work and life at school, and heard individual pupils from Year 1 and Year 2 read.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including systems for checking progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures, and the school's analysis of how well it is doing and how it plans to improve. Records of checks on the quality of teaching and minutes of governing body meetings were examined.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of subjects and classes, especially writing and mathematics.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, school staff and groups of pupils. Individual pupils were spoken to in lessons and around the school. A meeting took place with a school adviser from the local authority.
- Questionnaires from 25 members of staff were analysed and considered.
- The inspectors took account of the views expressed in the 56 online responses from Ofsted's Parent View inspection questionnaire and some letters from parents. They held informal meetings with parents at the school during the inspection.

Inspection team

Anna Sketchley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fiona Robinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's Infant School is smaller than the average-sized infant school. Most of the pupils live locally.
- Children in the early years provision attend the Reception classes on a full-time basis.
- All pupils are taught in single-year-group classes.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is much higher than in most schools.
- The school houses a resource base for children with complex needs which can accommodate up to ten children. Places are allocated by the local authority but the resource base is led and managed by the school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority) is similar to that found in most schools.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school organises breakfast and after-school clubs.
- It has recently been agreed to amalgamate the infant school with a local junior school. A new primary school, due to be built on a field adjacent to the infant school, is scheduled to be opened in September 2016.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide opportunities for pupils to develop a stronger understanding of the many different cultures that exist today in modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- A very strong focus by all leaders, including governors, on upgrading the quality of teaching from good to outstanding has ensured significant improvement of the school's performance since the previous inspection. Excellent teaching now effectively secures rapid learning for all pupils.
- Leaders use performance management rigorously to set aspirational targets for pupils' progress. These are driven by the highest quality of teaching. Teachers know that they are expected to meet their targets and will be rewarded for doing so. Knowledgeable subject leaders use their considerable expertise to support teachers' professional development. They ensure that teachers learn new skills and improve quickly if teaching seems to be falling short of the school's high expectations.
- All subject leaders adhere to the school's high expectations of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in all their work. Known as the 'golden thread', these skills have a high profile with pupils and teachers, ensuring that basic skills are very well taught and learned.
- The introduction of more rigorous checks on how well pupils are doing has resulted in teachers planning very accurately for pupils' differing abilities. This is particularly the case for the most vulnerable groups of pupils. Because of this secure system, all pupils consistently make the best possible progress.
- Effective support from the local authority in checking the school's data ensures that the school's information about pupils' achievement is correct.
- Adults constantly model the school's values which are deeply embedded in all its work, giving rise to excellent relationships built upon trust and respect. Exemplary pupils' behaviour and attitudes flourish in the positive atmosphere created. This makes a significant contribution to their outstanding progress.
- Leaders ensure that all pupils are fully included in what the school offers. No pupil is discriminated against and everyone enjoys an equal opportunity to take part in all activities. This is especially the case for pupils in the resource base for complex needs who join mainstream classes every afternoon. These pupils, and others who are disabled or who have special educational needs, are extremely well supported by highly skilled adults both in the resource base and in classes throughout the school. Outstanding leadership of this special provision ensures that these pupils make the same excellent progress as all other pupils.
- Additional pupil premium funding is led and managed very effectively. A wide variety of well-organised interventions are in place. For example, effective one-to-one teaching helps pupils to learn their numbers and develop phonics (sounds and letters) skills. Emotional support and conversations with parents and pupils also contribute to disadvantaged pupils making the same very good progress as all other pupils.
- A carefully planned, exciting and challenging curriculum combined with imaginative teaching leads to pupils being eager to learn. For example, during the inspection a whole-school theme of 'Emergency' was creatively linked to subjects. This provided opportunities for writing, mapping, designing and making and using measuring skills, learning about the emergency services and much more. Visits, such as those to the local fire and police stations, bring learning alive for pupils.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development strongly underpins the life of the school. The school revisits its six values of respect, love, perseverance, friendship, truthfulness and courage throughout the year. Through these values pupils gain a well-developed sense of right and wrong and learn to get on very well together. Links with a school in Gambia and taking part in celebrations such as the Chinese New Year help pupils to develop an understanding and tolerance of other world cultures and faiths. However, provision for pupils to grow in understanding of the different cultures that exist in Britain is less well developed.
- The school provides well-planned opportunities for pupils to develop a good understanding of democracy and British values. For example, they take part in activities such as team work, voting for the school council, and exercising choice when selecting challenges in their learning.
- Extra sports funding has been used well to develop teachers' skills in dance, gymnastics and outdoor games. Parents commented that pupils' physical skills, energy levels and coordination have all improved because of the increased range of sports teachers are now able to offer. Pupils really enjoy the early morning 'Wake and Shake' sessions. These have helped to improve the attendance of some pupils.
- High attendance at the recent 'Maths Workshop', discussions with parents during the inspection, and responses to the inspection questionnaire all indicate a strong partnership between parents and the school. In the words of one parent, typifying the views of others: 'We have nothing but praise for the way our child has been taught and nurtured ... and ... are delighted that the school is giving our child a love of learning and enthusiasm for work. The topics and teaching have really inspired him.'
- Pupils are extremely well cared for. Safeguarding procedures are well known to all adults and rigorously adhered to. This ensures that all statutory requirements are met.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors demonstrate their full commitment to the school by the thoroughness and diligence in the way they carry out their various responsibilities. Attendance at governor training sessions, their own personal skills and visits to school, reports and presentations from staff all prepare them well for their tasks. Joining with staff in the 'Away Day' each year gives them an excellent opportunity to take a full part in checking where the school is in relation to national benchmarks and to plan for further school improvement.
- Governors are very knowledgeable about the school's performance and this enables them to ask challenging questions as well as to support developments. They use key information extremely well to check pupils' progress in relation to the quality of teaching and national standards. Governors are very well aware of how performance management is used to reward teachers in relation to pupils' outstanding achievement and also how it is used to tackle any relative weaknesses in teaching.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Adults' high expectations are transferred to pupils who, in turn, express very positive views of behaviour. Pupils know they are expected to behave sensibly and safely, and they give clear examples, such as learning not to run in school. They are very polite, well-mannered and respectful to adults.
- Pupils with particular behavioural needs are exceptionally well supported and managed, and considerably improve their behaviour over time.
- Pupils play very happily together and show great consideration for each other. They have a very good understanding of what constitutes safe play on the playground and know what it means to 'be kind, be gentle'.
- The rich experiences pupils are offered really excite and stimulate them. Their love of learning shines through their excellent attitudes to their work. They behave exceptionally well in lessons, even when working in groups that are not directly supervised, and there is no low-level disruption.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in their very good attendance, and they are punctual and eager to start the day at 'Wake and Shake'.
- School records show that there have been no exclusions, and that racial incidents, bullying and challenging behaviour are extremely rare.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The care of pupils is exemplary. Leaders, including governors, provide and maintain an extremely safe working and learning environment for the whole school community.
- Rigorous guidance and procedures for health and safety are fully in place and are regularly reviewed and updated. These include all the required child protection procedures, thorough vetting of staff and stringent assessment of risks associated with school visits.
- Pupils show an excellent understanding of making safe decisions, particularly in relation to using computers both at school and at home. They know to tell an adult immediately if there is a problem.
- Pupils feel very safe in school. They have a very good knowledge of what constitutes bullying and how to deal with it but say, 'It doesn't happen here!' They say confidently that they know how to 'walk away and tell an adult' if they are in any kind of trouble.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is outstanding. The school's creative approach to enthusing pupils has led to a strong consistency of excellent practice and high expectations throughout the school. The 'golden thread', which hangs in classrooms, has been an important factor in pupils' rapid progress, for example, through pupils following the thread to help them remember to use full stops and capital letters in their writing.
- These high expectations extend to pupils' behaviour and attitudes so that a very positive atmosphere exists in lessons. Pupils are quick to listen to adults. They concentrate well and, although learning is exciting, they share ideas sensibly. Pupils' focused behaviour makes a significant contribution to their very good achievement and social development.

- High quality resources enrich and support learning very well, especially in information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils value regular opportunities to use computers and hand-held technology.
- Teachers' expertise and skill promote pupils' rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, when reading to inspectors, pupils were able to competently use their phonics (knowledge of the sounds that letters make) skills to work out unfamiliar words such as 'Switzerland' and 'raiders'.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge enables them to give very clear explanations. Pupils respond well to probing questions that challenge their thinking. Teachers are particularly skilled at adjusting questions and tasks to suit pupils' differing needs and abilities. An excellent example of this was seen in a mathematics lesson when pupils were learning to answer questions about information on a graph. Given the opportunity to explain their answers, some of the most-able pupils demonstrated that they already fully understood the concept. The teacher immediately adjusted her questioning and asked more challenging questions, enabling the pupils to accelerate their own progress more rapidly.
- Pupils are given exciting opportunities to challenge themselves, which create confidence and speed up their learning. During a writing lesson using the stimulus of the story 'Burglar Bill', pupils' attention was entirely captured by a pupil dressed as Burglar Bill. They quickly learned how to use powerful adjectives in their writing as they rehearsed describing the character using 'the power of three' adjectives in a row.
- In response to outstanding teaching, pupils in the resource base learn and thrive exceptionally well in a vibrant and secure setting. In response to the theme of 'Emergency' this term, pupils developed their physical skills well when building a huge interactive model of a lighthouse. Their language skills also benefited significantly through sharing the story of the 'Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch', meeting a paramedic and visiting the fire station.
- Exemplary use is made of assessment to check pupils' progress and plan their next steps in learning. These next steps are shared very clearly with even the youngest pupils. Individual targets for pupils, and marking that explains how they can improve their work, successfully help them to make the best progress they can. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Teachers ensure that classrooms, indeed the whole school environment, are vibrant with displays that celebrate and value pupils' work. They include useful information and basic facts to help pupils with their tasks.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children join the school with skills that are lower than those typical for their age, a substantial number beginning school with skills that are much lower. They have weaknesses in all areas of learning. This means that many children have a lot of catching up to do in preparation for Year 1.
- Until 2014 standards in Year 2 were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2014 there was a dip in attainment in Year 2 and assessments showed that standards were below average for writing and mathematics, and average for reading. Attainment was adversely affected by a disproportionately high number of pupils with complex needs. Assessments showed that standards for pupils without these special educational needs remained above average.
- At the time of the inspection, school information and work in pupils' books in the current Year 2 showed standards to be above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This demonstrates that the excellent progress pupils make in their Reception Year is successfully built upon in Years 1 and 2.
- Disadvantaged pupils who do not have complex needs reach the same above-average levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics as other pupils in the school. They are the equivalent of a term's progress above in each subject compared with other pupils nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those in the resource base, are exceptionally well supported by highly skilled teachers and teaching assistants. For example, pupils in the resource base demonstrated new skills in using a knife properly as they prepared their own mid-morning snack. As a result of excellent teaching and support they make the same rapid progress, from their various starting points, as all other pupils in the school. A comment in a letter from a parent sums up this excellent provision: 'My child has blossomed and is making great steps at spending time in the mainstream class ... and ... is moving forward with speech, social skills, eating and physical skills, in a friendly and caring environment.'
- The school has a strong reading culture. Pupils say that the school attaches great importance to their learning to read well, and they thoroughly enjoy the books teachers share with them. The most-able readers already have favourite authors. Less-able readers still make very good progress because their phonic skills are very well taught. Pupils use these skills well when reading and writing, and are very proficient at sounding out unfamiliar words.

- The most-able pupils reach a higher level than is expected in all three areas of reading, writing and mathematics. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson pupils worked quickly and accurately at challenging word problems when learning to double numbers.
- Pupils demonstrate increasing confidence in using their writing skills across a range of subjects as well as when writing stories. Scrutiny of their work in Year 2 showed that pupils have developed high standards of accuracy in punctuation and spelling. They write very competently for a range of purposes and audiences, including writing letters, diaries, reports and lists.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Early years teachers work very effectively as a strong team because of excellent leadership. The outstanding provision ensures that all groups of children, from their various starting points, make rapid progress in their Reception year. An above-average number reach a good level of development by the end of the year, preparing them extremely well for Year 1.
- Children are extremely well looked after and kept very safe. Caring relationships and well-organised classrooms and outdoor spaces secure a warm, welcoming but also exciting environment. This means that children want to come to school. They thoroughly enjoy all the stimulating activities planned for them and quickly grow in confidence, developing their social and emotional skills very well.
- Children from the resource base who join Reception for the afternoons are exceptionally well supported and fully included. This helps them to grow in confidence, enriching their social and emotional development as well as their learning.
- Children learn to respect simple rules and boundaries, taking turns and calmly playing and working together even where they find activities exciting. Exceptionally well-planned areas and activities mean that they are fully engaged in their learning. Consequently, their behaviour is exemplary.
- Teaching is outstanding and adults are highly responsive to children's needs, planning imaginative experiences across all areas of learning. For example, when searching for numbered eggs in a wide variety of places children responded enthusiastically to the encouragement to explore their environment, developing their curiosity and thinking skills very well.
- Adults use their questioning skills very well, and use their expert knowledge of how young children learn to extend children's language and understanding. In this way children develop key skills quickly in readiness for Year 1. For example, during one phonics session the most-able children confidently identified the 'oo' sound, following up by successfully reading and spelling new words with the same sound.
- Children demonstrate considerable competency in counting skills, seen when using a giant number line to count backwards and forwards to fifteen. The most able rapidly learned to apply the meaning of 'one more' and 'one less' than a number on the line.
- Teachers keep very careful records of children's development. These regularly inform planning for the next steps in children's learning. Partnerships with parents and local pre-schools are very strong. Parents are kept well informed of their child's progress and are warmly welcomed at all times.

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	126339
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	448576

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Taylor
Headteacher	Anne Schwodler
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 December 2009
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