



St Mary's CofE (Aided) Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102593
Local Authority Kingston Upon Thames
Inspection number 276742
Inspection dates 21–22 September 2006
Reporting inspector George Rayner

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Chessington
Age range of pupils	3–11		KT9 2DH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8397 9597
Number on roll (school)	229	Fax number	020 8397 9598
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Maria Evans
		Headteacher	Mr Paul Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 1999		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St. Mary's is an average sized school. It is located in a residential suburb on the outskirts of the London Borough of Kingston upon Thames. Pupils' socio-economic circumstances are generally average, although there is considerable variation in the area. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. Although there is some variation from year to year, standards on entry to the Foundation Stage are below average in most years.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the school is good. It has overcome a period of considerable turbulence in leadership and staffing, which had a detrimental impact upon the school's ethos and pupils' achievement. Now, a stable, capable, leadership team and staff are effectively focused upon improving standards. The very positive views of parents and carers show that they recognise the changes. One praised the 'dramatic improvements to the overall educational standards' that have been secured.

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Standards have improved significantly over the past two years and are now broadly average by the time pupils leave the school. Children make a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage, where the provision is good. They make particularly good progress, in social and literacy skills because the school identifies these as key areas of need which are met very effectively. Good progress continues in Years 1 to 6. The school has achieved this by accurately identifying the areas in which it most needed to help pupils to improve and developing teaching strategies to accomplish this. The only area in which improvement has been less marked is for the most able boys in writing, because teaching does not always challenge them well enough to bring the very best out of them.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Adults work well as a team to make the school a happy place. This results in pupils enjoying school, which they show by their readiness to be involved and in their good behaviour. All children, even the youngest, settle in very quickly and their verdict is that the school is a friendly and welcoming place. Regular, clear, guidance ensures that pupils know how to be safe and healthy. They respond well to encouragement to play a full part in life in school and wider society, which stands them in good stead for the future.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers and other adults work together effectively to help pupils achieve well. Adults' relationships with pupils are good and teachers make clear what they expect in terms of behaviour and learning. The curriculum provides well for all pupils' needs. Continuity between the Nursery and Reception has improved since the last inspection and is now good. The curriculum has good breadth and balance in most respects, but opportunities for pupils to use computers in all of their subjects are limited. The school cares well for its pupils. All child protection procedures are well-organised and carried out diligently. The good quality of academic guidance and support is an important factor in pupils' improving achievement.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by his deputy and all other staff and governors. There is a clear and effective focus on improving standards. Consequently, although improvement was slow in the years immediately after the last inspection, the rate has accelerated markedly in recent years. This indicates a good capacity for continued improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers challenge the more able boys to write as well as they can.

- Enhance pupils' learning by developing more opportunities for them to use computers in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are broadly average and achievement is good. The school has worked effectively to eradicate the underachievement that existed in Years 1 and 2 at the time of the last inspection and to reverse the decline in Years 3 to 6 that set in immediately afterwards. Staff have worked well together to develop their teaching strategies in order to improve standards. For example, in literacy they have worked on guiding pupils to become good readers and supporting them in improving their techniques for writing. In mathematics they have developed pupils' skills in mental calculations and solving problems. In almost all respects pupils achieve well including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school is aware however, that the exception is more able boys, who are achieving well in most respects, but only satisfactorily in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal, social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Although not all children have well developed social skills when they enter the nursery class, they leave the school as mature and confident young people. Their positive attitudes are reflected in their enjoyment of school and their good behaviour. Attendance is broadly average, but is affected by the lower attendance of a small group of pupils. The school is working well with outside agencies to improve this. Pupils know the importance of setting a good example to the small number who behave less well than the majority.

Even the youngest pupils show a good understanding of the importance of keeping safe and adopting a healthy lifestyle and pupils particularly enjoy the opportunities they have to exercise regularly. Pupils contribute well to school life and to the wider community. They enjoy taking responsibility for various aspects of school life. For example, older pupils receive training to help them sort out minor disputes between children in the playground and the active school council takes full responsibility for keeping minutes of their meetings and uploading these to the school's website. Such opportunities prepare them well for secondary school and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers use a variety of activities to make lessons interesting. For example, they regularly use the interactive technology to show images and video clips which stimulate

pupils' interest and support their learning of key points. Pupils enjoy their learning and are strongly motivated to do well. They have good opportunities to discuss and collaborate with others and respond well to these.

Teachers make good use of assessment to plan well for the needs of different groups of pupils and to focus extra help or challenge. This ensures that all do as well as each other in almost all respects. However, writing activities for more able pupils are not always challenging enough to ensure they make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and covers all the required subjects. Pupils have good opportunities to use their literacy skills across a range of different subjects. Improvements to the Foundation Stage curriculum means that the youngest children now have good opportunities to learn through a wide variety of adult led and play experiences. Although information and communication technology (ICT) is appropriately planned and taught to develop pupils' computer skills, opportunities for them to use and develop these across other subjects are limited.

Specialist teaching in some subjects, particularly physical education, and a wide range of visits, visitors, and well attended clubs contribute well to pupils' learning. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is well planned to ensure they are involved well in all learning activities. The school has good links with the local church, community and other partners which it uses well to enhance the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Systems for caring for pupils are well organised and conscientiously carried out. All procedures for child protection and for assessing and dealing with risks are efficient. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are more vulnerable are well supported and included within the school.

Regular assessments help teachers to identify pupils who are not making the progress they should. The school provides a good range of additional support for these pupils, through programmes delivered by skilled teaching assistants and through good links with specialist agencies. The progress pupils make in these programmes is meticulously tracked and effectively followed up. Teachers involve pupils well in understanding how they can improve. The school is currently developing its methods of involving pupils in assessing their own progress to further improve this. As one pupil commented, 'the good thing about the teachers is that they help us do our best'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The senior team works very cohesively. Subject leaders and others working at middle levels respond well to the balance of clear definition of their responsibilities and freedom to be creative. Knowledgeable governors, willing to question and challenge as well as support, play their full part.

The senior leaders command a high level of loyalty from staff and governors. This is evident in the widely shared commitment to the vision of the school as a happy place in which all achieve well. Office staff for example, in addition to providing a channel of communication that was highly praised in parents' questionnaire responses, regularly contribute in other ways. Because staff can see the effects of their work in improvements in both the performance of the school and its ethos, morale is high.

Systems for monitoring how well the school is doing are well organised. They include systematic programmes for reviewing the progress and success of initiatives such as the Raising Attainment Plan. Teaching is monitored regularly and this provides clear guidance to staff on their strengths and what they could improve. Guidance from local authority advisers is regular, valued and acted upon. Regular note is taken of the views of pupils and parents and carers through, for example, surveys and the school council. These approaches have given the school a clear and accurate view of its performance and have been an important factor in accelerating its rate of improvement in recent years.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We enjoyed our recent visit to your school and would like to thank you all for making us feel welcome. We were able to see that yours is a good school. Until a few years ago, it was not doing so well because there were many changes in staff. Now though, staff are much more settled. The headteacher has a very clear idea of how to make things even better. He and all the other adults are working together well to make it both a happy place and one where you all succeed. Because of this, the school has improved much during the last few years.

In the Nursery and Reception you make good progress in learning how to get on together and using language to let others know what you are thinking. In other years, you do well in all of your subjects. The adults give you good help to read and write well and to do calculations and solve problems in maths. The brightest pupils do not do quite as well as you could in writing, though. This is because your writing tasks are not always difficult enough to bring the very best out of you. The adults know and are working to improve this.

Teachers plan interesting lessons and work well with the teaching assistants to make sure that you all get the help that you need to do well. They check very carefully to make sure that you are all doing as well as you should be. It was good to see how much you enjoy PE and games and benefit from being taught by an expert. Although you learn to use computers well, you do not get enough opportunities to use them in all of your subjects.

An important reason that you do well is that you enjoy school, behave well and work hard. This helps your teachers a lot. Well done to you all.

George Rayner

Lead inspector