



# St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 115155  
**LEA** ESSEX LEA  
**Inspection number** 279527  
**Inspection dates** 22 March 2006 to 23 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Ms. Ruth Frith LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Castle Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		CB10 1BQ
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01799 523384
<b>Number on roll</b>	185	<b>Fax number</b>	01799 506384
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs.Elizabeth Brown
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4 December 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr. Graeme Ellis

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 22 March 2006 - 23 March 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 279527
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school whose pupils come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils receiving free school meals is broadly average. Pupils' attainment on entry covers a wide range but, overall, is similar to that usually seen in pupils of this age. However, their communication skills and personal, social and emotional development are often poor. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is above average, as is the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need. Most children come from White British backgrounds but a very small minority come from a range of other ethnic groups. Six pupils speak English as an additional language. There have been significant changes in staffing as the number of classes has fallen from nine to six over the last two years. The headteacher has been in post for five terms following a temporary headteacher who had worked in the school for two terms.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in pupils' standards and achievement and aspects of leadership in relation to self-evaluation. The school is beginning to improve but is not yet providing a satisfactory education for its pupils. It provides unsatisfactory value for money. Standards are not as high as they should be because pupils have not made enough progress over time and they are underachieving. The quality of teaching is inconsistent but it has improved recently and is now satisfactory overall. This is helping pupils to make better progress. However, the improvements are yet to have an impact on the Year 2 and Year 6 national tests, although the results of the latest school assessments indicate that the school is likely to meet its challenging targets this year. The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory and rapidly improving due to better quality teaching. The school curriculum is satisfactory and the pupils take part in a good range of clubs, visits and sporting activities. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy school, and attendance is slightly above the national average. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and most pupils behave well. The pupils are kept safe in school and those with learning difficulties are given satisfactory support. Although most pupils know their targets, teachers do not always tell them what they have to do next to improve their work. The current leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall, and improving. Since taking up his post, the headteacher has been strongly committed to the school and determined to raise standards and the quality of provision. Managers and governors have very effectively managed a difficult situation since the last inspection in relation to the budget, which has now put the school on a firm financial footing. This has resulted in a reduction in staffing and a major reorganisation of the school. New systems for planning and assessment have improved the quality of teaching and enhanced pupils' progress. However, the school's systems for checking on the quality of its provision are inadequate. In particular, the procedures to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning are not good enough; much more rigour is needed to ensure that all teachers follow school procedures and build on identified areas for improvement. Even so, in light of the recent significant improvements to teaching and the curriculum there is now satisfactory capacity to improve.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) by ensuring that teaching methods consistently engage pupils and meet differing needs so that pupils make good progress. - Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by checking it more regularly to ensure that all teachers follow the school's policy, and targets are met. - Improve leadership and management by making self-review procedures more rigorous.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Pupils do not make sufficient progress and achievement is inadequate. Over several years, pupils have not achieved as well as they should and standards have been too low. This was reflected in the 2005 Year 6 national assessments when standards were exceptionally low in English and below average in mathematics and science. These pupils made inadequate progress during their time in Years 3 to 6. The current pupils in Year 6 are reaching better standards in English and mathematics than in previous years, and a higher percentage of pupils are working at a level above that expected for their age. This indicates that the school is beginning to provide better challenge for the most capable pupils in some classes, although this is inconsistent across year groups. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress, as do those with English as an additional language. Children enter the school with standards similar to those usually seen for their age and by the time they enter Year 1 standards are broadly satisfactory. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are currently making better progress than pupils in previous years. Standards are better than the exceptionally low standards in writing and below average standards in reading and mathematics achieved last year. Although all these improvements are significant, pupils are still not consistently reaching the standards of which they are capable. However, the school is likely to achieve its challenging targets with the current Year 6. Across the school, standards in ICT have been affected by inadequacies in resources and are overall below those usually seen.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good. Attendance is just above the national average and pupils enjoy school. Nearly all behave well but a few find it difficult to meet the high standards set by most staff. Pupils have good relationships with staff and one another. They feel safe and are comfortable in approaching a member of staff if they need, or when posting a concern in the recently introduced 'worry box'. Pupils say that any incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with effectively by the staff. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community through raising funds for a variety of charities, attending civic events such as the Remembrance Day service and singing for the public. Members of the school council are enthusiastic about their role and pleased to contribute ideas to the development of the school. Pupils are learning to eat and drink healthily, and readily drink water throughout the day. At lunch times all the children are involved in purposeful exercise, playing creatively with the resources and equipment provided by the school. They also take part in many sporting activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils support local and national charities and are given opportunities to reflect on their own lives and the lives of others. For example, the prayer board provides an opportunity for pupils to offer thoughtful reflections on others' needs. However, the school does not do enough to fully promote awareness of the wider multi-cultural society. Preparation for secondary education and life beyond school is now satisfactory because pupils are making satisfactory progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Overall, teaching is satisfactory and the recent improvements are beginning to impact positively on pupils' learning. Pupils' attitudes and relationships in the classroom are positive and behaviour is good. This provides a strong platform upon which to build better practice. However, the quality of teaching is often inconsistent. In the best lessons, there is a clear focus, the pace of learning is brisk, activities are stimulating and work is appropriately matched to the needs of the pupils. These good features impact well on the quality and rate of learning, thereby ensuring that pupils make good progress. However, in some lessons, pupils are not sufficiently challenged, particularly the most capable, and time is not used well enough. This results in pupils not achieving as well as they could or attaining high enough standards. Due to recent improvements in planning, there is appropriate coverage of the curriculum and, in many lessons, the needs of pupils are highlighted accurately and addressed. Their progress is assessed and recorded regularly, and literacy and numeracy targets are set for pupils and shared with their parents. Most of the pupils are aware of their targets, but these are not being used consistently across the school and not all pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own learning. The marking of pupils' work is sometimes not used to provide enough direction on how they can improve further. This results in pupils being too dependent on the adults, not being able to think things through for themselves or have control over their own learning.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

Significant improvements have been made to the curriculum recently and it is now satisfactory. Developments in music and physical education and the use of specialist staff have raised the profile of these subjects in the school and developed pupils' skills. Weaknesses in ICT are currently being addressed through considerable investment in resources and staff training. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their skills across subjects are underdeveloped. Curriculum planning ensures that, within mixed-age classes, pupils receive appropriate coverage of subjects. Learning is made interesting through educational visits linked to subject areas, such as history and geography, and good use is made of the local area. A good range of additional activities and clubs develops pupils' physical and creative skills, and the celebration of events such as V. E. day enriches their experiences. A focus on specific subjects, for example in Science Week, helps to develop pupils' skills and extend their interests. Staff have introduced positive initiatives to support pupils who experience difficulties with learning so that they make satisfactory progress.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school is friendly and welcoming. Pupils are happy and their pastoral care is frequently good. Suitable child protection procedures are in place and staff are regularly trained. Governors and staff have an oversight of health and safety procedures and areas of risk are acted upon. Pupils' academic care and support are generally satisfactory but there are weaknesses. For example, pupils with learning difficulties receive satisfactory support in the classroom but systems for identifying them initially are not consistently applied. Recent developments have helped to ensure that pupils know their academic targets but they do not always know what they need to do specifically to improve their work. Parents have mixed views of the school and most of those expressing concern reflected difficulties associated with the past. However, a significant number of parents highlighted recent improvements that are seen to be having a positive effect upon the school.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, but there are some significant shortcomings. The headteacher is determined to improve the school. He gives clear direction and has tackled some difficult issues successfully. These include the reduction in staffing due to the fall in pupil numbers, reorganisation of the school, improved behaviour, better teaching due to improved planning and assessment, better pupil progress and tighter finance control. This means that the school is now in a stronger position to move forward than it has been over the last two years and has the capacity to improve. However, there is still much to be done because standards are not as high as they could be and the school has not yet effectively dealt with pupils' long-term underachievement. The systems for self-review are inadequate and parents, governors, teachers and pupils are not sufficiently involved in the process. In addition, the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning are not sharp enough and the information is not used effectively to develop a good school improvement plan or give staff a sense of purpose to help raise standards. The roles of the subject leaders have improved recently but the lack of focus on developing strategies for improvement has led to a lack of clear targets for teaching in order to bring about change. Governance is satisfactory. The governors have improved their roles and are now more aware of the need to be proactive and keep a check on school developments. Good financial management has resulted in the school reducing its deficit budget so that managers are now in a position to fund identified priorities.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	NA

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

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I am writing to say thank you for making us feel so welcome and for talking about your school and the work you have done. We think that St Mary's School is getting better and we particularly liked the following: - the teaching is improving so that you now make better progress - you enjoy school and attend regularly - you behave well and generally get on well together - you enjoy the clubs, visits and other activities provided at school, particularly those for physical education and music - the school council is doing some good work - staff look after you well and you feel safe in school. Despite the things mentioned above, we still think that the school could improve more. We have agreed that the school could get even better if you all work together on the following: - continuing to improve the standard of work in English, mathematics, science and ICT - making all lessons as interesting as the best we saw - making sure that the school has a clear picture of how well it is doing and a good plan for improving it. Thank you once again and good luck in the future.