

# St Mary's CofE VA Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110848
<b>Local Authority</b>	CAMBRIDGESHIRE
<b>Inspection number</b>	288794
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 July 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marina Gough

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	204
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Michael Pope
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Mary Barnard
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 November 2002
<b>School address</b>	Wintringham Road St Neots Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE19 1NX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01480 398048
<b>Fax number</b>	01480 398049

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is close to the centre of St Neot's and draws pupils from an area of high social deprivation. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is above the national average, and the school also has a high percentage of pupils who come from the local permanent Traveller site. Few pupils have English as an additional language. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award and ECO Schools bronze status. It is part of a local Learning Network and the Intensifying Support Programme.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils of all abilities thrive as individuals. The school knows itself well and has good capacity to become even better because there is a well prioritised agenda for continued improvement. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection in many areas of the school's work and the school provides good value for money.

When the children start school in the Nursery, their attainment is very low. Children of all abilities achieve well in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. Nevertheless, standards at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and number are below the national average. In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress really starts to accelerate, so that standards at the end of Year 6 are average in mathematics and above average in science. In English, standards are slightly lower than the national average because pupils have difficulty with writing and their spoken vocabulary is limited.

Behaviour throughout the school is excellent. Pupils have high levels of respect for one another and for adults. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and are well prepared for each stage of their education and for their future lives. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The vast majority of pupils love coming to school. However, attendance levels are slightly below the national average despite the excellent steps the school takes to monitor absence and encourage good attendance.

Teaching and learning are good overall. The best teaching is seen in Key Stage 2 where there are many examples of outstanding practice. In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 teaching is often good, but it lacks the flair and imagination seen in Key Stage 2. Pupils of all ages are keen and receptive learners who take an active part in lessons. By the time they leave school pupils have a very strong work ethic and high levels of concentration and perseverance. Pupils with learning difficulties and pupils from Traveller communities are well supported and these groups of pupils achieve well.

The curriculum is good for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils and satisfactory for children in the Foundation Stage. The school provides an outstanding range of additional learning activities over and above the statutory curriculum that significantly enrich pupils' learning and increase their experience of life beyond their immediate environment.

The school is well led and managed by an experienced headteacher who is tireless in her efforts to help pupils to achieve their best. One of her significant strengths is her ability to forge extremely positive relationships with parents, so that barriers to the pupils' learning can be removed. The headteacher, staff and governors are committed to raising standards for all age groups, and have welcomed the additional support provided through the Intensifying Support Programme and through the school's involvement in the Local Network for Learning.

Individual subjects and specific areas of the school's work are well managed by coordinators, but at this stage of the school's development, the combined management of the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is too heavy a workload for one member of staff to successfully sustain. The governing body fulfils its duties well and is supportive, and knowledgeable about the life and work of the school.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in speaking and writing across the school.
- Reorganise the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 leadership and management roles.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards when the children join the Nursery class are very low, especially in the areas of language and social development. Although the achievement of Nursery and Reception children is good, their overall attainment is well below the level expected for their age when they transfer to Year 1. Throughout Key Stage 1, pupils achieve well but many struggle to master the basic skills of literacy, language and number. At the end of Key Stage 1 standards in these areas are below the national average overall. In Key Stage 2, pupils achieve well and at times make excellent progress. Standards at the end of Year 6 are average in mathematics, above average in science, and just slightly below the national average in English. Throughout the school, the development of speaking and writing skills are the weakest elements of pupils' learning.

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

### **Grade: 1**

The personal development and well-being of pupils is outstanding. The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils both in lessons and on the playground is exemplary. Pupils say that following a campaign by the school council, bullying is now almost non-existent.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils have very good levels of insight into different cultural and religious beliefs and lifestyles, and a very strong sense of what is right and wrong. The large Traveller community within the school is extremely well integrated and they thoroughly enjoy talking about and sharing their lifestyles with other pupils.

Pupils of all ages love coming to school and thoroughly enjoy their learning. Nevertheless levels of attendance are slightly below the national average reflecting the persistent absence of a small number of pupils. The school makes excellent use of a range of external agencies so that pupils have an excellent knowledge of how to keep themselves safe both in and out of school. Pupils maintain very healthy lifestyles. They fully appreciate the need for taking regular exercise and for eating fresh food. They make good progress in developing the academic and personal skills needed for the future world of work, and are very well prepared for each subsequent stage of their education. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to their own and the wider community through such things as the school council, raising money for charity and the excellent 'Making the News' club.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. In Key Stage 2, there are many examples of excellent practice and teaching is often imaginative, exciting, challenging and pacy. Pupils are highly motivated and very responsive to the best teaching. By the time pupils leave school they are highly effective, mature and independent learners. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good, but at times some of the activities are too formal. Teaching in Key Stage 1 is good but not as inspiring as that seen in Key Stage 2. Lessons and activities are well prepared and effectively meet the needs of different groups of pupils but they sometimes lack sparkle. In all classes the school computers and other technology are used exceptionally well by teachers and pupils as a tool for teaching and learning. Assessment information is used very effectively to track pupils'

progress and to alert staff when pupils are experiencing difficulties. The marking of pupils' work is good and provides pupils with good pointers about how they can improve their work.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils is good and is extended and enriched by an excellent range of additional learning opportunities. Pupils have the chance to attend a wide variety of clubs, and to participate in events with other local schools. They are invited to take part in educational visits, including a residential trip to the Isle of Wight, and gain much from the input of visiting speakers. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage children is satisfactory, but not enough emphasis is placed on the children learning through free and structured play activities. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good, and the school provides a wide range of intervention strategies to support those who are finding aspects of their learning difficult.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The care, guidance and support offered by the school to its pupils is outstanding. The school fully complies with statutory requirements for safeguarding children and for child protection. Vulnerable pupils are very carefully and sensitively monitored. The Traveller Computer Club which meets on a weekly basis is an excellent example of how the school meets the specific needs of different groups of pupils and removes barriers to learning. Pupils are very happy to approach any adult with problems, and the youngest pupils have an absolute trust in the Year 6 'Playground Assistants'. Pupils receive excellent academic and personal support, and as a result, pupils of all abilities have high levels of self-esteem coupled with a realistic appreciation of what they need to do to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has excellent inter-personal skills which have enabled her to build very strong links with parents, including the parents of the children from Traveller families. There are exceptionally high levels of parental satisfaction. The headteacher keeps a firm handle on standards, and has worked very closely and successfully with the local Learning Network and the local authority to drive up standards in mathematics. There are firm plans to apply the same focused approach to raising standards in speaking and writing, both of which are priority targets on the current school improvement plan.

Subject coordinators are effective in monitoring and managing their areas of responsibility, especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. However, the school realises that the combined responsibility of managing both the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is too much for one member of staff to successfully fulfil. The governors are very supportive of the school and provide a good level of challenge through their school improvement committee. The governors, staff and headteacher have a good appreciation of the school's relative strengths and weaknesses. They share a strong commitment that gives the school a good capacity for future improvement and development.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	1
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

9 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Mary's CofE VA Primary School, St Neot's, Cambridgeshire. PE19 1NX

I am writing to thank you very much for the warm welcome my colleague and I received when we inspected your school a short time ago. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and were delighted by your excellent behaviour and your very enthusiastic attitude to learning.

You all try very hard to do your best, and it is pleasing to see how standards are now improving, especially at the end of Key Stage 2. However, writing is still an area that many of you find difficult and one that needs improvement. We also discovered that some of you do not have a good enough vocabulary and this makes it difficult for you to explain your ideas. We think you could make more effort with your speaking and have asked your teachers to provide you with more speaking activities.

We were pleased to see that your teachers go to a lot of trouble to make activities exciting, especially in Key Stage 2. You enjoy the activities that are on offer, especially the many clubs and visits. We were delighted to have the opportunity to speak to the school council and to the 'News Team', and these pupils told us lots of positive things about the school. Your teachers and support staff provide excellent levels of care and you say that you feel safe and well looked after. You told us that you can go to any adult if you have a problem, and that they do their best to sort any concerns out for you.

Your headteacher, governors and staff are doing a good job in making the school a happy place and improving the standard of your work. We are pleased with the way that teachers take on different roles in the school, but some of the tasks need sharing out a bit more evenly, so we have asked the governors and headteacher to look for ways of doing this.

I hope you all have a good summer holiday.

Best wishes from Marina Gough (lead inspector)