

# St Mary's Church of England VA Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117497
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE
<b>Inspection number</b>	290856
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Paull

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	176
<b>School</b>	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr R Dean
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs A Botarelli
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 March 2005
<b>School address</b>	Dellsome Lane North Mymms Hatfield AL9 7NF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01707 690500
<b>Fax number</b>	01707 690502

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Mary's is smaller than most primary schools. Its pupils are nearly all from White British backgrounds. Very few speak English as an additional language and none is at an early stage of doing so. The proportion entitled to a free school meal is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is average and four pupils have a statement of special educational need. Attainment on entry is usually typical of the age, although it is lower than that in some year groups and ranges very widely in others. An inspection in March 2005 stated that the school no longer required special measures.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The school provides a good education, and has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for further development. Since March 2005, when the school was last inspected, continued effective leadership and management have resulted in consistent improvement and many good features are now apparent. This is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement which is good. The quality of teaching and learning has risen from satisfactory to good, which is resulting in good rates of progress in lessons for the majority of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Standards in Years 5 and 6 remain average and do not yet reflect the better teaching that all pupils are now receiving. Their writing is slightly weaker than their reading, mathematics and science. Nevertheless, much is being done to rectify this. Challenging targets are now set for all pupils and shared with parents. Inconsistency in marking, however, continues to hinder improvement. While it is carried out conscientiously, style and quality vary from class to class. Pupils do not therefore benefit from a unified approach and, even amongst more able pupils, there are a few who say that they take little notice of comments about what they should do to improve.

Nearly all pupils say that they enjoy school, want to learn and are proud of their rising achievement. Attendance is satisfactory. Good provision in the Reception class results in good achievement. Many children reach the expected goals. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is currently good. However, owing partly to differences in attainment on entry in different year groups and partly to staff changes, results of national tests and assessments at the end of Year 2 have been erratic. In 2006, for example, results were below average although they are usually average. Nevertheless, good leadership has resulted in prompt action. Effective strategies have been introduced in Year 3, so pupils are clearly catching up again quickly. This type of effective, responsive leadership occurs at all levels of management. The school's systems for monitoring teaching, progress and personal development are good, leading to equally good systems for care, guidance and support. However, several parents do not feel that their views are heard strongly enough, while others' comments indicate that they are not fully aware of the school's recent strong improvement. Pupils' personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils' behaviour in and around school is also good. They behave safely and are aware effectively of the importance of leading healthy lifestyles. Pupils in Year 6 recently demonstrated strong organisational skills and contributed to the wider community enthusiastically, through 'Red Nose Day'. Younger pupils showed much willingness to act as good citizens in supporting their ideas well. The school council provides pupils with a useful voice and takes appropriate note of their suggestions. Recent improvements in literacy and numeracy linked to pupils' good social skills mean that they are prepared satisfactorily for life outside school. The school's evaluation of what needs to be done next is effective and governors support and question decision-taking well. Value for money is satisfactory. These attributes, set alongside the recent track record of progress, indicate that the school's capacity to continue to improve is good.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Introduce a system of marking to show more able pupils especially what they must do to improve their work, especially in writing.
- Introduce more effective ways of working with parents, so they feel their views are heard and so they understand more fully the benefits of recent improvements.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, standards are average, which is born out in the 2006 results of national tests. An upward trend is apparent because good teaching and learning are now ensuring most pupils make good progress in lessons, including pupils with learning difficulties. Challenging targets are being set and most pupils reach them. Children in the Reception year are well taught and therefore thrive academically and personally. In 2006, an average proportion reached expected goals by the end of the year, despite starting points that were below average for many. Results of national assessments towards the end of Year 2 are usually average, although some significant variation is evident, usually reflecting differences in starting points from year to year. Records indicate that standards and rates of progress are now rising effectively as pupils move up the school.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development and well-being are good, including spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils grow in self-awareness and reflect upon their feelings and actions. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They encourage and support one another. They welcome opportunities to help others through, for example, the 'playground squad'. Cultural understanding is satisfactory, but held back a little because pupils' awareness of Britain as a diverse, multicultural country is rather restricted. Most children in the Reception are enthusiastic learners, who settle into school well and quickly make new friends. Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Attendance is satisfactory, although a small number are often absent, while a few parents remove their children for holidays in term time. Pupils are generally courteous and polite. They are enthusiastic about visits that they make and about days or weeks with themes, such as 'healthy eating day'.

They develop a good understanding of personal safety and learn to look after one another. Pupils raise funds for charities and are active in their school, readily offering their ideas to help in the immediate community and its environment. Pupils are building a satisfactory foundation for later life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. It has yet to have a full impact on pupils' achievement. In the Reception careful planning supports good learning in all areas. Positive relationships between staff and pupils form the basis of productive learning. Pupils' different learning styles are provided for, with adaptations that help all of them to learn effectively, including those with learning difficulties. Lessons and activities are increasingly varied and stimulating and teachers have high expectations that pupils will take increasing responsibility for their learning themselves. In most classes pupils are told how to recognise their successes, so they remain focused and make good progress. However, teachers' marking styles are inconsistent through the school. In some classes, marking gives pupils a clear picture of what they have achieved and what they need to focus on next. In others, this does not happen consistently and several pupils, including the more able, state that they do not have many opportunities to respond to teachers' comments.

Support staff make a significant contribution to learning. They are well briefed with clear roles, whether working with individuals or groups.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets most pupils' needs successfully. After school activities, visits and visitors enhance it well. Senior leaders have correctly identified weaknesses in planning. They are now putting in place an increasing emphasis on activities that apply learning to life. Subjects are increasingly linked so that what is learnt in one is practised and developed in another. What is taught in the Reception class is already good. All areas provide young children with exciting things to do, strongly linked by appropriate themes. Provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory. The curriculum is modified to take account of the needs of the less able, although arrangements are not yet effective for pupils with particular talents.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. Staff know their pupils well. Good support and thorough induction systems ensure pupils settle quickly when they join. Procedures to protect pupils and care for the vulnerable are good. The health, safety and welfare of pupils are considered paramount by the school. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is effective. Behaviour is monitored well. Provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language is equally effective. Procedures for monitoring academic progress are thorough. Challenging, achievable targets are set and used to measure pupil progress and achievement. These are shared with parents and pupils, although feedback from marked work does not consistently tell them what to do next.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The staff work well together as a team, monitoring performance and striving for improvement. The school has moved on significantly since its last inspection and achievement is rising. Pupils are making good progress in lessons and standards are also improving, although owing to a legacy of underachievement remain average, despite good teaching. This is because improvements in teaching and academic care are too recent to have a full impact. Provision in the Reception class is well managed. The role of the co-ordinator for special educational needs has changed from one of providing support to that of monitoring and checking it. While a few parents see this as a backward step, in fact, the knowledge and awareness of class teachers and teaching assistants have in providing for these pupils has improved. Several parents feel that their ideas are not heard effectively. Governors are effective and ensure that satisfactory value for money is achieved.

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## Annex A

## 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>
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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?	3
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

<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>	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	3

### 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>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

21 March 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Dellsome Lane, North Mymms, AL9 7NF

Thank you for being so helpful and polite when Mr Greatrex and I visited your school. You helped such a lot to make the two days go smoothly. We enjoyed looking at your work and talking to you. It is great that so many of you told us that you like school. We agree with your school councillors that your teachers teach well and look after you while you are there. Your school provides a good education for you and it is getting better.

Here are some other things that we like about your school.

- You behave well and nearly all of you are working hard.
- Your teachers make sure that you learn effectively and that most of you make good progress.
- Your headteacher and staff work well together and are making many improvements to your school.
- The Reception class prepares its children well for the main school.

Here are some things that we have asked your headteacher, teachers and school governors to do

- Make sure that all the teachers all use the same ways to mark your work, so you know how to make it better, particularly your writing.
- Involve your parents more fully in the work of the school, so they can support it more effectively and understand how all the changes are improving it. You can help with this by telling them all the good things that you told us.

I hope that you will get on very well in the future and that you will always be proud of your school.

John William Paull

Lead Inspector