



St Mary's Church of England Infant School, Marlborough

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 126339
Local Authority Wiltshire
Inspection number 293528
Inspection dates 18–19 January 2007
Reporting inspector Peter Clifton

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	George Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Marlborough
Age range of pupils	3–7		SN8 4BX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01672 513101
Number on roll (school)	128	Fax number	-
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	B Tarring
		Headteacher	S Jones
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001		

Age group 3–7	Inspection dates 18–19 January 2007	Inspection number 293528
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school. The proportion of pupils attending the school with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. The school has two units for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. 'Starworld' is the school's pre-school unit specialising in communication difficulties. 'Starbase' is an infant specialist centre for pupils with complex needs and draws pupils from a wide geographical area. 'Starbase' pupils are included whenever possible in main school activities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Mary's is a satisfactory school with good features. The school offers good care, support and guidance. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and there are effective links with parents. Parents strongly support the school's work and recognise its strengths. Many rightly comment on the school's friendly nature and the concern that adults show for their children. One parent said that the school 'helps children to feel happy and positive about themselves and their abilities'. Pupils say they feel safe and well supported. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities are well integrated into the life of the school. Attendance is broadly average but is adversely affected by a small number of pupils who do not attend sufficiently regularly.

The Reception and 'Starworld' units are strengths of the school. In the Reception classes, children flourish because of good provision. The pupils settle in quickly and achieve well. They come into Reception with the abilities expected across most areas of learning, but with slightly lower standards in communication, language and literacy and in mathematics. Their good start enables them to make up any deficit so that, by the time they finish in Reception, standards are securely average. Provision in 'Starworld' is good because effective assessment procedures draw widely on external specialist support. In 'Starbase', relationships are outstanding and pupils enjoy lessons because of the close attention they receive from staff.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are close to the average. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2, although too few reach the higher Level 3 and more able pupils make inconsistent progress. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, pupils are well managed, behave well and have positive attitudes. However, there are weaknesses in planning because teachers do not consistently use the information they have as a starting point for setting new work. The curriculum is satisfactory, although skills are not always built on sufficiently well. Both of these factors limit progress, particularly for the more able pupils. Leaders have correctly identified this as a key area for further development.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders have a clear view about areas that need to be developed and have introduced a number of appropriate changes to improve standards. These are leading to satisfactory improvement. However, leaders are not clear enough about how well these initiatives are working. A key reason for this is because they do not have a sharp enough view about the progress that pupils are making. This weakness in evaluation has led to the leaders thinking that the school is doing better than it is.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 through the better use of assessment, particularly for more able pupils.
- Sharpen the analysis of information so that there is a more accurate understanding about the progress that pupils make.

- Improve evaluation of actions taken so that their effectiveness can be carefully measured.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory. Children come into the school with skills that are broadly in line with expectations, but slightly below in a few key areas. They make good progress through Reception and reach average standards. Year 2 test results in 2005 were average, with above average standards in writing. The 2006 test results show a slight decline, with pupils reaching average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. There are too few pupils reaching the higher Level 3. More able pupils make inconsistent progress because planning does not always meet their needs in Years 1 and 2. Current standards in the school are broadly average.

Pupils make good progress in developing their personal and social skills. 'Starbase' pupils make good progress in reading and 'Starworld' children achieve well. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well across the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school is a friendly community. Pupils trust adults in the school and get on well with each other. They feel well cared for but there are a few instances of name-calling in the playground which they find upsetting. Pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe and how to respond if approached by a stranger. Good work habits are quickly established in the Reception, providing a firm basis for further development

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils appreciate the celebration assemblies. They largely enjoy school and keenly answer questions in lessons. The school council provides a satisfactory voice for pupils in the school. They have, for example, represented the views of pupils about lunches. Pupils are considerate towards each other and value the school as a community. There is a good emphasis on eating and drinking healthily, with meals being prepared fresh on the premises. Pupils eat plenty of fruit at meal times and enjoy being active in physical education lessons. They respond well to initiatives for raising money for other children who may be less fortunate than themselves.

Older pupils confidently express their views and show consideration to others whose views may be different. Their involvement with the many visitors, such as authors, artists and the police, gives them good insight into the work that some adults do. This prepares them satisfactorily for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In Reception, good planning ensures that the needs of children are met well. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution working with individual groups. Teaching ensures pupils have many opportunities to develop speaking and reasoning skills. ICT is used very effectively to support learning and children confidently use computers to write sentences. In the 'Starworld' unit, teaching is good because the needs of individual children are very carefully assessed. In 'Starbase', teaching is satisfactory because the monitoring of progress is not always sufficiently sharp to guide further development.

Overall, relationships are good and in lessons the large majority of pupils listen well. They respond well when asked to contribute and work well together. On occasions, pupils are kept on the carpet for too long and, as a result, a few pupils lose concentration. Planning for the most able lacks sharpness and teachers sometimes ask pupils to repeat work they have already covered and understood. As a result, these pupils sometimes find the work given too easy and this limits their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Topics are suitably planned to cover all areas of the curriculum. In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum is a strength, particularly on the creative side, with good opportunities to develop skills in art. This ensures that these children get a good start in all areas. There is good balance between activities directed by teachers and those started by the children themselves.

The curriculum is adapted well for those pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities and, with the sensitive support provided, many of these pupils achieve well. Enrichment of the curriculum through visits is satisfactory. There are many visitors coming into the school to work with the children. There is an effective personal support programme promoting good relationships.

Weaknesses in meeting the needs of more able pupils mean that their skills are not developed systematically. This has not been helped in numeracy, for example, because pupils are in mixed-age classes on some days and, on other days, they are in ability groups, making it difficult to ensure that work is consistently challenging.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's friendly atmosphere and concern for each pupil ensure that pupils feel well supported. Pupils are confident that they will be listened to by staff and that adults can be approached to sort out any difficulties. Child protection procedures are securely in place. Staff ensure that their risk assessments cover all likely possibilities

before visits. There are good systems to check on and encourage good attendance. However, these have not been successful with the few pupils whose attendance is poor.

There are effective systems for rewarding pupils' good work. Celebration assemblies are used well to acknowledge effort and good work. Pupils have targets and most pupils can say what these are. In lessons, what is being learned is shared so that pupils can judge how well they are doing. Pupils with learning difficulties have individual plans with targets that are relevant to their needs. Good support is sensitively provided for those pupils who find it difficult to concentrate. External support is very well used, particularly for those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has established a keen team of staff who work well together. Monitoring and evaluation of lessons identify areas of strength and weakness, providing teachers with clear feedback about what needs to be improved. Subject leaders are clear about strengths and weaknesses of individual subjects from analysis of pupils' work and test results. However, weaknesses in measuring the progress that pupils make hamper the evaluation of the changes made.

Links with parents and with the local community are good. Some activities are structured so that parents can come into the school to work with their children. Governors provide strong support. However, the challenge they can offer has been limited because they have not been given sufficient information to judge the effectiveness of change. There is a clear system which tracks attainment as pupils move through the school.

Leaders have very largely addressed issues raised in the previous inspection. Initiatives are in place to sharpen the school's evaluation of progress. There have been significant improvements in accommodation and resources, including a good outside play area. Changes being made are addressing weaknesses appropriately leading to satisfactory improvement. The school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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	3
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

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome to your school. We enjoyed talking to you in lessons and during your playtimes and were very impressed with how open and friendly you were. You gave us valuable information and this was a great help to us. We think your school is satisfactory with good features and it gives you a satisfactory quality of education.

What we most liked about your school:

- Your good behaviour and attitudes.
- How well adults look after you in school.
- The good start you make in Reception.
- How well the school works with your parents or carers.
- The work done in the 'Starworld' unit.
- How well pupils with learning difficulties join in with others.

We have asked your headteacher and others to:

- Improve the teaching by making sure that the work you are given in lessons is not too difficult or too easy.
- Make sure that your teachers are clearer about the progress you are making.
- Make sure that the school's managers measure how well it is helping you to improve.

We greatly enjoyed the visit and hope your school continues to improve.