

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

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115155
<b>Local Authority</b>	ESSEX
<b>Inspection number</b>	295395
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	George Falconer HMI

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>	159
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The local authority
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Graeme Ellis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 March 2006
<b>School address</b>	Castle Street Saffron Walden Essex CB10 1BQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01799 523384
<b>Fax number</b>	01799 506384

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

St Mary's is a smaller than average school with an intake of 159 children from a variety of backgrounds. Attainment on entry varies quite markedly but is broadly in line with the national average. Some children demonstrate abilities in communication skills and personal, social and emotional development is below the national average. The percentage of pupils eligible to free school meals and those with special educational needs is the same as found nationally. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is lower than the national average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Standards are now satisfactory and demonstrate commitment to improve by the Head and senior leaders.

The overall effectiveness of this school is satisfactory. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory because the headteacher, staff and governing body have worked hard to improve the school. Governance is strong and the school now demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve. Much of this is due to the solid practical strategies that have been put in place to raise the quality of leadership and management and teaching and learning. However, the leadership and management team knows it has to consistently monitor progress and apply good practice across the school to maintain and improve standards.

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall with pupils demonstrating significant improvements in the 2006 Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 tests where English scored above the national average. Mathematics and science were broadly average. The school recognises it needs to work harder and more effectively to raise achievement and standards in English, mathematics and science for all pupils. Strategies to make sure that teaching and learning have consistently high expectations to meet all learners' needs are developing but are not yet fully embedded. The school acknowledges it needs to continue to monitor progress and apply good practice consistently across all classes. This is not yet fully in place. Progress is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, as is the curriculum provision which is enhanced effectively by a good range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory with most pupils enjoying their time at school. The level of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Behaviour has been an issue and continues to be a main focus for improvement with a new behaviour management strategy that is beginning to impact positively with pupils. St Mary's provides satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in English, mathematics and science by making sure that teaching and learning have consistently high expectations and meet all learners' needs.
- Make sure that the behaviour of all pupils is improved through the recently introduced behaviour management policy.
- Make sure that the leadership team consistently monitors progress and applies good practice across all classes.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Achievement and standards have had a history of being well below the national average. However, a positive change through gradual improvements resulted in better performance at both key stages in 2006 with the results being broadly average compared to national figures.

Pupils enter school with broadly average abilities but with many lacking in communication skills, as well as having poor personal, social and emotional development. However, the Foundation Stage works hard with these pupils who are given a really good start. By the time they reach Year 1, standards are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils continue to demonstrate satisfactory progress by the end of Year 2 where achievement and standards are in line with the national average. The 2006 Key Stage 2 results for Year 6 demonstrated that pupils' achievement and standards were also broadly average with English above the national average and with more pupils reaching the higher levels. However, the majority of pupils are still not yet reaching their full potential, particularly in mathematics and science.

The use of monitoring, tracking and target setting for pupils is beginning to impact positively in two ways. Firstly, teachers are beginning to have higher expectations of their pupils and secondly, pupils have better levels of support because of the more accurate tracking of their progress and more accurate target setting. This is influencing positively attitudes to learning as well as achievement and standards.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Most pupils like coming to school and attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils say teachers deal fairly with any incidents, including any bullying, and as a result they feel safe. Pupils are confident that behaviour is improving. Overall behaviour is satisfactory. Pupils say they enjoy lessons when teachers make them interesting. They are developing a satisfactory understanding of healthy living and many are eager to take up sport. Many know the importance of eating healthily although some do not appear to practise healthy eating. Pupils are keen to support the work of the school council and raise funds for charities. Links with the local community, particularly the church, are strong. This contributes effectively to pupils understanding their social responsibilities. They are keen to discover other ways of life and religions and to support those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are developing appropriate skills to support them in their future lives. Preparation for transfer to secondary school is satisfactory. Safeguarding procedures are appropriate.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and have improved since the last inspection. More teaching is of good quality and pupils are generally making the expected rate of progress. However, there are still some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.

Effective induction arrangements help the children settle quickly into the reception class. The good emphasis placed on developing the children's social and communication skills ensures they develop a positive attitude to learning and make satisfactory progress.

Throughout the school, the monitoring and assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory. Pupils are given clear targets in English and mathematics, but marking is variable and in some classes pupils are not given sufficient guidance on what they need to do to improve their work.

Information from assessments is being used appropriately to plan lessons and to set work which is better matched to the needs of the pupils. However, in some lessons, though satisfactory,

expectations are not high enough, leading to unsettled behaviour. Nevertheless, the school's behaviour management strategies are starting to have a positive impact with most pupils.

Teaching assistants often work well with groups or with individuals and make a difference. Pupils with learning difficulties receive sound support and this enables them to make the expected rate of progress.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is enhanced effectively by a good range of extra-curricular activities including visits to places of interest and visitors to the school. The school has recently reviewed the balance of time allocated to subjects and has introduced ability sets in mathematics to help raise standards. However, it is too early to judge the impact. Early indications are that this initiative is successful with several pupils. New information, communication and technology (ICT) resources have a positive impact on learning and enjoyment. Links between subjects are being identified but as yet are not sufficiently well developed to deliver a creative and exciting curriculum across the school. Aspects of healthy living, staying safe, and the development of skills to help pupils in their future lives are satisfactory but not yet sufficiently re-enforced throughout the curriculum. There are strengths in the music and physical education curriculum and pupils achieve well in these subjects. Aspects of pupils' cultural development are promoted effectively and pupils are gaining a good understanding of other ways of life.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with developing strategies that are starting to improve pupils' guidance and support. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are sound and under regular review. Health and safety and risk assessments are regularly monitored and checked. The environment is safe and supportive and the headteacher and staff pay close attention to the level of care for pupils, who say they are well supported. The level of academic support is satisfactory and is helping pupils towards achieving more challenging targets. However, some pupils are still not reaching their full potential. The school has good relationships with supportive external agencies. Recent but positive changes to the school's behaviour management system have led to some parents having concerns for the happiness of their children but the system is making a satisfactory contribution to the overall education provision. It is not yet, however, working consistently across the school and minor misbehaviour sometimes results in the quality of teaching and learning not being as good as it could be.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. They are improving continually as the recently introduced strategies, combined with new staffing organisation, begin to impact positively on the quality of teaching and learning. This, in turn, is having a gradual but positive effect on the achievement and standards of the pupils. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and the school has a good sense of its current and future development in order to make all round improvements in a measured way. The headteacher tackles issues with energy and determination. Many changes have already been made to support the raising of achievement and standards. The

recently introduced senior management arrangements, supported by curriculum coordinators, are developing effectively with increasing involvement from the governing body and the local authority. Governors do a good job in giving strategic support to the headteacher and by being positively critical. The school development plan is robust and has a number of appropriate targets to be reached over time. The headteacher is realistic and he is aware that more improvements need to be made, such as raising attainment levels, particularly for the more able pupils. The behaviour of pupils is also seen as a key area to develop further and the school is aware of its importance in relation to the quality of teaching and learning. Links between the school and the community are satisfactory with plans to further develop clarity of communication. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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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>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	3

### Personal development and well-being

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

<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>	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

17 May 2007

Dear Children

St. Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided School, Saffron Walden Essex

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful during our visit to your school.

We had the chance to talk with quite a lot of you and to see you working in your classrooms as well as at playtimes, lunchtimes and in assemblies. You asked us some important questions about our views on your school. We can answer those questions now. We saw that all of your teachers work hard and are dedicated to giving you a really good opportunity to grow and develop at St. Mary's. They think carefully about the lessons they take and the things that they want you to learn.

They work very well as a team and are beginning to plan even more carefully now so that the work you get to do is going to make you think that little bit more. In this way you will always be working at the right level. The lessons you have vary, with some being more interesting than others.

Your headteacher and other staff are going to make sure that lessons are always interesting and that you improve your knowledge and understanding as you move through from year to year, no matter which class you are in.

For your part, many of you work hard and enjoy school and this is great. You take a pride in your work and help and support others too. You enjoy all the sporting activities with your teachers and your sports coach as well as your playtimes. However, some of you do not work hard enough in class. Unfortunately there are a few of you who do not make good use of your time in lessons and this leads to not learning as much as you could. Behaviour of a few children is sometimes not as good as it could be and this can stop you and others from learning as well.

Your teachers and other adults are working well to make sure behaviour is good all of the time. We think that you could make a big difference by helping. It is your school and we are sure that you would like everyone to be proud of St. Mary's. Therefore we would like you to think about how you can help your teachers as well as helping yourselves.

Best wishes

George Falconer HMI