

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

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115176
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	311865
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Julie Winyard 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>	
School	78
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Mary Cottee
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sue Grocock
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 June 2003
<b>School address</b>	Main Road Woodham Ferrers Chelmsford Essex CM3 8RJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01245 320505
<b>Fax number</b>	01245 320505

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Mary's CE Aided Primary School Woodham Ferrers is a smaller than average rural primary school. A number of children come from outside the designated catchment area. There are very small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups and none who have English as an additional language. There are no children with statements of special educational need. However, the proportion of children identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school has some pupil mobility, making the numbers on roll less stable than other schools nationally. The school's disadvantage indicator is lower than the national average and very few pupils are entitled to free school meals.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

With the excellent leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of all staff, the school provides a good quality of education. This is seen in pupils' good academic achievement and their outstanding personal development. Through effective teaching, a good curriculum and outstanding relationships at all levels, pupils respond well and make good progress throughout the school. Good teaching and well planned activities in the Reception class mean that children start well, make good progress, and reach the expected levels by the time they move into Year 1. They continue to make good progress overall through the rest of Key Stage 1 and attain above average standards for their age in reading and mathematics when assessed at the end of Year 2. In writing, although attainment is in line with the national average pupils make slower progress throughout the school. One of the reasons for this is because marking is not always linked to class targets for improvement. This is sometimes less effective than it could be in ensuring pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve their work. Careful planning and good support for the pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to make good progress and exceed the averages for similar pupils nationally, except in writing.

Parents are unanimous in their praise of the care their children receive. This is exemplified by the following parental comment: 'The headteacher and her team genuinely care for each and every pupil and treat all as individuals. We cannot thank the school enough for ensuring that every day is an enjoyable one.' The pastoral care, and support for pupils are outstanding. All staff know the pupils well and provide a very safe, secure and caring environment. Teaching is good and behaviour is excellent both in lessons and around the school. Pupils have a strong sense of social responsibility and make an outstanding contribution to the school and the wider community. They have excellent attitudes to school, thoroughly enjoy what they do and have a strong commitment to their own learning. However, they do not always take enough care in the presentation of their work in all subjects. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and what it means to be healthy. With their good social skills and the above average standards they achieve in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education and their future economic well-being.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher gives outstanding direction to the work of the school and a very strong lead to the staff. The detailed monitoring of the school's performance by the headteacher results in accurate self-evaluation. The school's improvement plan, clearly based on this monitoring, is detailed and comprehensive. However, the role of subject leaders in monitoring their subjects is not yet fully developed because they do not observe teaching or talk to pupils about their learning. Governance is good and the various committees and clear roles and responsibilities for individual governors ensure that the work of the school is carefully monitored. The good progress since the last inspection shows the school has a good capacity for continuing development and provides good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children come to the school from a variety of local playgroups. Staff manage the transition into school very well and children are settled and happy as soon as they arrive. Attainment on entry is broadly average and children make good progress in all the areas of learning because of the well-planned activities and good teaching they receive. By the end of Reception, the

majority achieve the early learning goals and some are working beyond this level. One of the strengths of the provision is that Reception children work alongside Year 1 and this builds their confidence and supports their learning. For example, they were thrilled to share the digital photos they had taken of their outside activities with their older classmates at the end of the lesson. There are good arrangements to ensure children's safety, health and well-being, including careful risk assessments for outdoor activities. Very good links with parents are maintained through formal and informal meetings. The home/ school reading record enables parents to share in their child's learning and also communicate important information about home life. The Foundation Stage leader has a clear view of the strengths and areas for development in the provision. The introduction of a creative, skills based curriculum has enhanced the opportunities for children to learn effectively together.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards and progress in writing across the school and improve the quality of presentation of pupils' work in all curriculum areas.
- Develop a consistent approach to marking across the school.
- Ensure that subject leaders contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards at the end of Year 2 have risen steadily since 2003 and are now above average. Results in mathematics and reading are now higher than other schools nationally. Standards in writing remain in line with the national average. There was a dip below the national average in 2006, which the school acted rapidly to address. Such dips are not necessarily significant because St Mary's is a small school where a few pupils can have a disproportionate effect on performance data.

Progress from Year 2 to Year 6 has improved steadily over the last two years placing the school in the top 11% of schools nationally. By the end of Year 6 standards are above national expectations. The school has set challenging targets for the next two years and rigorous tracking data indicates that pupils are making good progress towards these targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress from sometimes very low achievement levels when they start at the school. However, pupils do not achieve as well in writing and the school has rightly recognised this as a key area for improvement.

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

### **Grade: 1**

As one parent wrote, 'Encouragement for the children's welfare, health and fitness is excellent and cannot be faulted'. Inspection evidence fully endorses parents' views about personal development and well-being. Provision for pupils' social, moral and spiritual development is excellent. Pupils say they feel safe in school and there is no bullying. They praise the Year 6 pupils who have trained as peer mediators and help resolve problems when they occur. They also appreciate the role of pupil play leaders who introduce new games at lunchtimes and make this a very happy and active time. Community cohesion is a strength of the school. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they work collaboratively at all times showing great respect and consideration for each other and adults. Cultural development is good with planned curriculum opportunities to ensure pupils understand diversity. This includes a recent programme of music

from around the world. Attendance is slightly below average and authorised absence is above average. In lessons, pupils are enthusiastic about learning and their enjoyment is evident in the way they apply themselves wholeheartedly to tasks set. This is echoed by a parent who writes: 'I have trouble getting them out of the playground at the end of the day!' Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle and sports clubs are very well attended. They bring healthy snacks for break and make healthy choices for their lunchboxes. Year 5 and 6 are very knowledgeable about the dangers of smoking and were able to give graphic reasons as to why this should be avoided, despite peer pressure. 'It's not cool to smoke!' Pupils make a very positive contribution to the community through their regular fund-raising activities and are well prepared for their future economic well being because of the good progress they make in basic skills and their confident use of ICT.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is consistently good. During the inspection, about half the lessons observed were outstanding. Excellent relationships have been established between teachers and pupils. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils respond confidently. However, expectations for presentation of work are not yet high enough which means some work is not as neat as it could be. Teachers use praise and encouragement well. Pupils enjoy challenge and are able to work well independently, as well as in pairs and small groups, where collaboration is excellent. Work is well matched to their level of understanding and pupils say that if they have difficulties, teachers are quick to help them. The time and skills of teaching assistants are used well to support learning for pupils of all abilities. Good, regular use of ICT by teachers and pupils enhances learning and adds further variety to the wide range of approaches teachers use.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is broad and balanced and is enhanced by many good quality visits and visitors to the school. The recent 'Egyptian Day' gave Key Stage 2 children a great opportunity to experience life as an Ancient Egyptian. They learnt about many aspects of life and death including how to make a 'mummy'. The school plans the curriculum well and ensuring good coverage of all required areas of learning and appropriate support and challenge for all pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities enriches the curriculum and all are well attended. The flute and computer clubs provide very good opportunities for extending the skills of gifted and talented pupils.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pastoral care and support has a very positive impact on pupils' well-being and academic guidance is satisfactory. Parents refer to 'the excellent pastoral care' and inspection evidence endorses that this is outstanding for all pupils. The school's strong Christian ethos has a considerable influence on the very supportive relationships amongst and between staff and pupils. Safeguarding procedures are fully in place and the school has very good procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified

quickly and very good provision is made for them to ensure they make good progress. The school works exceptionally well with external agencies to ensure their needs are met. Teachers' marking is regular and often supportive. However, it is not always targeted at the learning objective for the lesson or the challenging class targets that pupils are working on. Attendance overall is judged to be only satisfactory but this is due to the impact of poor attendance by a very small minority of pupils. The school is doing everything in its power to improve attendance rates.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership of the school is focused successfully on raising achievement and standards. The headteacher provides an excellent example in her determined drive for improvement and outstanding care and support for pupils and staff. The school has worked very hard over the last year to improve leadership at all levels. Subject leaders recognise that there is still work to be done in developing their role in monitoring teaching and learning within their subjects. The governing body give good support to the school. Governors are working hard through their committee structure to be an effective critical friend to the school. Parents are very strong in their praise for the school and the impact it has made on their children's learning and well-being. The school has identified its key areas for development through rigorous and accurate self-evaluation. It has a good capacity to make further improvements.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	1

### 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>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

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**Annex B**

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

22 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Aided School, Woodham Ferrers, Essex, CM3 8RJ

I really enjoyed my visit to your school this week. Thank you for being so helpful and welcoming. It was good to have the opportunity to talk with you about your learning during lessons and to have a longer discussion with the School Council. They do a very good job in bringing your ideas to the teachers. I was particularly impressed with your excellent behaviour. It was also good to see how hard you work during lessons and how well you work together. Peer mediators and play leaders are doing a great job to make playtimes enjoyable and safe for everyone.

Your headteacher and teachers are working very hard and look after you extremely well. The targets you have in your classrooms are helping you to make better progress with your work. There are a few things that you, and the school can do to help you improve further and be even better prepared for your future life.

- Improve your knowledge about writing so that you can write even better stories, poems and reports.
- Have a system for marking your work that you understand and is the same across the school so that it helps you know exactly how to improve.
- Make sure your work is always as neatly presented as it can be.

Thank you again for making my visit to your school so interesting and enjoyable. With every good wish for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Winyard HMI