

# St Mary's Church of England Foundation Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115269
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	311896
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Helen Ranger

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	106
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Tracey Harrison
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Christine Tonkins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 June 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	St John's Road Stansted Mountfitchet CM24 8JP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01279 812212
<b>Fax number</b>	01279 815958

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average-sized school caters mainly for pupils who live in the immediate area. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and are from a wide range of home circumstances. About 10% of pupils come from a range of minority ethnic groups and a few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with additional learning needs in literacy and numeracy is broadly average. There is a Reception class for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). A separately managed setting for younger children, Rainbow Pre-school, operates from a room in the main school building. When children start Reception, their attainment varies widely but, overall, is in line with the levels expected nationally for four-year-olds.

The school belongs to a local federation of primary and secondary schools set up to extend links and opportunities for both pupils and staff. It is also part of a national pilot, 'Making Good Progress', which aims to ensure that every pupil achieves as well as possible. There is considerable new building in the village and the school is in consultation with the local authority about its future size and site.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Mary's has maintained the pace of improvement identified at the time of its last inspection and is a good school. Parents' views are very positive. Their comments in the inspection questionnaire show that the school lives up to its motto of, 'Caring, sharing, preparing for life'. Parents and pupils alike say that the school is welcoming and inclusive. Pupils achieve well both academically and personally. Standards are above average. Behaviour and attendance are good and pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They are effectively taught about how to lead safe and healthy lives. They rightly feel that their opinions are valued by the adults.

Pupils learn effectively because teaching is good and lessons planned to take account of individual needs. One of the main reasons for the school's continuing improvement has been the implementation over recent years of a good range of assessment and tracking systems. These ensure that the progress of each pupil is checked and, where appropriate, extra support or challenge is given. The systems have developed in tandem with changes to make the curriculum more creative, interesting and relevant to pupils. Partnerships such as those within the local federation of schools and with sports providers support these moves well. Current provision engages pupils and has a good impact on achievement. Staff have not yet fully realised their plans to increase the levels of practical and problem solving activities across the curriculum and some lessons are still too dominated by adults. Pupils do not always have enough opportunities to make an active contribution to discussions or to take responsibility and demonstrate their capacity for independent work.

The school offers a high level of pastoral care. Strong links with families, the church and community agencies underpin this. The quality of academic guidance and support for pupils has improved as the assessment systems have provided increasingly good quality information on progress. There are very good examples of marking and target setting and pupils are starting to be more involved in reflecting on their own learning and how they can improve. The staff know that there is more to be done here if the good practice is to be established consistently throughout the school, and there are plans for further development.

Good leadership and management are at the heart of the school's success. The staff work well together under the clear-sighted leadership of the headteacher. Governors are well informed and active in their support. The challenges caused by an ageing building and uncertainties over the school's future pupil numbers are being managed well. The school evaluates its practice efficiently. Staff responsibilities are delegated effectively and leaders of subjects and age groups have developed a clear understanding of how to check the school's effectiveness and plan further improvements. The school is well placed to continue to improve.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The Reception class gives children a good start. Almost all new entrants have attended the pre-school group on the site and there is a very good induction process and close liaison between the staff of both settings. Parents testify to how quickly their children settle to school routines. The Reception staff work well as a team and promote children's welfare effectively. Each child's interests and needs are assessed from the start and detailed records of progress in all areas of learning are used in planning activities. School records of recent years show that children make good progress so that, by the end of Reception, they have moved into Key Stage 1 with

attainment that exceeds the levels expected nationally. Already at this early stage this year, most children are confident, keen learners who enjoy school. Any who need some extra support with starting school receive it. A cookery session during the inspection demonstrated how learning about utensils and ingredients could be great fun while reinforcing the need to work safely in the kitchen.

There are close links between Reception and Key Stage 1 with staff working together to provide a good, child-centred approach that is tailored to individual needs, irrespective of age. The curriculum has been kept under regular review since the last inspection. In particular, the large outdoor area has been developed well, although slopes and drainage problems present staff with constant challenges. As in the rest of the school, the drive to encourage more independence in children's learning and to exploit all opportunities to develop spoken language is 'work in progress'.

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

- Increase pupils' active involvement in learning, including encouraging their oral contribution to lessons and providing more opportunities for them to demonstrate independence.
- Enable pupils to reflect more regularly on their achievements and to take more responsibility for improving their own learning.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Records show that pupils make good progress through the school. The successful arrangements for tracking and promoting this are ensuring that individuals' achievements build systematically year by year. Each age group is quite small and the school's overall academic performance fluctuates considerably as a result. In most recent years, pupils in Year 2 have reached above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. In the 2008 assessments, standards were exceptionally high in this age group. In the years since the last inspection for which national figures are available, pupils in Year 6 have steadily made better progress in Key Stage 2. In 2007 for example, their progress was good and attainment above the national average. The current Year 6 group is on track to reach above average standards by the end of the year.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Well developed social skills combine with good academic achievements to equip pupils for the future. They mostly behave very safely and responsibly and incidents of reported bullying or racism are rare. Parents report how well the older pupils look after the young ones. However, one reason why behaviour is not outstanding is that a minority of pupils do not listen well enough at times when others are speaking and this detracts from some class discussions and gatherings such as assemblies. While sometimes there are not enough opportunities for pupils to work independently in lessons, the school provides other activities that promote self-confidence very well. Pupils learn about citizenship through, for example, the school council and the chance to meet a Member of Parliament. A group visited London to make a presentation to architects and civil servants about how they would like a new school to be designed. Pupils' appreciation of safe and healthy lifestyles is good, and enhanced by nutritious school meals and the wide range of physical activities that has resulted in an Activemark national award. A high proportion walk to school

rather than travelling by car. Pupils' appreciation of cultural diversity is exemplified by their links with a school in Tower Hamlets and a whole-school project about Africa.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that pupils learn well. Lessons are orderly and relationships good. Activities are planned well to cater for the full ability range, including an appropriate range of activities to challenge able learners. Teachers and their assistants work well together. They set clear objectives for lessons and check regularly that pupils understand their work. Effective support is given to those who will benefit from some extra help. There is an appropriate focus on the basic tools needed for learning, including literacy, numeracy and computer skills. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils' output, though not all of them insist that pupils present their final drafts of work tidily enough. There are plenty of examples of good marking and feedback to pupils in exercise books, but practice is not consistent enough to ensure that pupils can continuously reflect on how their learning is progressing.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum covers all required subjects and is organised well to cater for the mixed-age classes. It addresses the needs of pupils who need stretching, those with particular gifts or talents and those who will benefit from extra help. It includes a good programme of personal, social and health education. A current initiative is integrating social and emotional aspects of learning into the entire curriculum. This is helping to make the curriculum more responsive to the needs and interests of learners and ensuring that pupils understand links between the various subjects and aspects of their work. There is a good range of clubs and visits and pupils spoke excitedly of their recent residential stay in Norfolk. Such provision adds greatly to pupils' obvious enjoyment of school.

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

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils and parents hold very positive views about the quality of pastoral care. Staff forge close links with families and pupils say they can trust adults to help with any problems. A pastoral teaching assistant is a key figure in organising 'team talks' as an open forum for discussion on wide-ranging matters. Events such as 'Friendship Week' enhance provision. The school is vigilant in its arrangements for child protection and safeguarding pupils. A well organised breakfast club is available. This gives pupils who attend a pleasant start to the morning and offers parents, such as shiftworkers at the nearby airport, a valued facility. Pupils who need extra help in lessons are supported well and the special needs co-ordinator manages this provision effectively. Good links with local agencies provide additional support for those who need it, including pupils with statements and those learning to speak English for the first time. Pupils receive academic support and guidance, for example, on their targets. The school has rightly identified this as an area for further improvement, so that pupils are helped to understand even more precisely how well they are doing and how to improve.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The current headteacher has enabled the school to build well on previous achievements. Parents who contributed their views to the inspection often singled out the head's particular contribution to the school's continuing development and its good partnership with families. Staff changes have been managed well. The governing body takes its responsibilities seriously. Governors have been instrumental in working with the local authority to maintain stability of the pupils for the longer-term future of the school. A good development plan reflects relevant priorities for action, although these do not always identify clearly enough the desired impact on pupils of planned initiatives. Staff and governors ensure that the school effectively contributes to, and draws from, the village community and the wider area, particularly through its church and federation links.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Annex A

## 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?	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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	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/or disabilities make progress	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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	2

## The quality of provision

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

## 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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

22 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Foundation Primary School, Stansted Mountfitchet  
CM24 8JP

This letter is to thank you for welcoming and helping me during my recent visit to your school. You and your parents told me that it is a good school and I agree!

Here are some of the best things I found.

- You do well in your work and reach a good standard for your age.
- The children in Reception get a good start to school.
- Attendance is good and you behave well towards each other.
- The staff listen carefully to your views about school.
- You are taught well and are given lots of interesting activities in school and in the clubs and visits.
- If you need extra help with work or an extra challenge, you receive it.
- Your headteacher is really clear about how she wants your school to keep on improving and she helps the staff and governors work to achieve this.

There are a few things I have asked the school to keep improving.

- I want you to do even more talking in lessons - not chatting, but sharing your ideas and knowledge with others when the adults ask you to.
- I would like the school to carry on giving you more activities where you can show that you can work independently, plan for yourselves and solve any problems you find.
- I have asked the teachers to give you more time to think about what you have learned and how you will carry on improving. You can help by listening carefully when adults talk to you about this and by acting on any comments they write on your work.

Carry on enjoying all that St Mary's offers you!

Best wishes

Mrs Helen Ranger

Inspector