

St Mary's Fields Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120025
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	339581
Inspection dates	20–21 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Keith Williams

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Susan Hulatt
Headteacher	Mrs Carol Browne
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who visited 16 lessons, during which seven teachers were observed. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and two governors. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its monitoring and assessment records, safeguarding documents and those relating to health, safety and strategic planning. In addition, 42 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were considered, together with those returned by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the extent to which pupils are on track to reach their targets and whether the differences in the performance of some groups in 2009 are present amongst current pupils
- whether writing opportunities have been extended sufficiently in other subjects, and how well these are monitored
- the extent to which the school's view that pupils make outstanding progress in aspects of their personal development is evident in practice
- the school's evidence to support its view that it provides outstanding support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about the school

Pupils at this smaller than average infant school are from a wide range of backgrounds. The proportion learning English as an additional language is well above average. Amongst the eighteen languages represented, the most prevalent are Punjabi, Gujarati and Polish. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average, with needs relating largely to moderate learning and speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion in receipt of a statement of special educational needs is well above that typically found. An above average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage join the school in the Nursery. The school provides a temporary home for an after-school club that is managed by the local authority and is inspected separately. The school has the Activemark award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Mary's Fields is a good school in which pupils achieve well academically and make excellent progress in aspects of their personal development. They enjoy school very much because they feel very safe and receive high quality care and support, consistently good teaching and an interesting, exciting and well-planned curriculum. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, one commenting, 'We are delighted with not only the education our children are receiving, but also the values and attitudes that the school ethos reinforces.' The school's highly inclusive, supportive atmosphere is one of its key strengths.

When children first start school, their attainment covers a broad range but, overall, it is below that typically found. The school tracks the progress of individual pupils very carefully and assessment records, together with pupils' work in books and lessons, show that all groups are making good progress and are on track to reach their challenging targets. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is in line with the national average. Each pupil is very well known to staff and, as a result, the school successfully meets pupils' widely differing needs. For example, potentially vulnerable pupils are extremely well supported and achieve well. Excellent links with outside agencies contribute strongly to this provision, and to the high quality support given to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are new to learning English. Partnerships with other schools are very strong, too. For example, the headteacher uses her expertise to mentor newly appointed headteachers in the local authority.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy and make outstanding progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is a harmonious community and pupils have a mature appreciation of its rich cultural diversity. They are well involved in local community events and inter-school activities. Links are being established further afield, but the formal monitoring of the impact of this work on community cohesion is at an early stage. Other aspects of the school's work are monitored well, and staff and governors contribute strongly. Consequently, the school has a clear and accurate understanding of what is working well and what can improve and, under the very strong leadership of the headteacher, the school is well placed to secure further improvement. Areas for development are identified and tackled robustly. For example, as a result of work to improve pupils' writing, their attainment is now consistently in line with the national average.

The school engages extremely well with parents and carers, many of whom help with extra-curricular activities and fundraising, and provides them with high quality information about their children's progress. Excellent links with parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have a considerable impact on

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their well-being. Attendance levels have fluctuated in recent years due, largely to a few parents taking their children out of school for extended family visits abroad. The school's efforts to tackle this mean that levels in the current year are rising, but staff recognise that there is still more to do to ensure that the attendance rate matches pupils' high levels of enjoyment of school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the school's monitoring of its impact on community cohesion beyond the local community.
- Work with parents and carers to reduce the number of term-time holidays.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The results of the 2009 assessments for Year 2 pupils revealed some differences in the performance of particular groups of pupils, but close scrutiny shows that the results were due to an unusually high proportion of pupils, particularly girls, having either significant special educational needs and/or disabilities, or being at an early stage of learning English. All groups made good progress from their starting points and the work in current pupils' books and lessons shows that pupils of all abilities, including those with moderate learning and speech, language and communication difficulties, continue to make good progress. Pupils learning English as an additional language are identified early and given excellent support so that they are fully included in class life, gain in confidence and make similar progress to their classmates. This was seen to good effect in Year 1, where a group of pupils new to learning English took great delight in matching words and objects on their shopping list. Pupils' good progress in learning basic skills means they are well prepared for their future lives.

Pupils respond well to the school's strong promotion of their personal development. They are extremely considerate in their dealings with one another and respond very thoughtfully during periods of quiet reflection, for example in assemblies. Relationships are very positive and pupils have a very clear understanding of right and wrong. They behave well in and out of lessons and expectations of them are high although, sometimes, over-direction from staff limits the opportunities for pupils to show initiative in the way they behave. Pupils contribute well to the smooth running of the school, for example by joining the school council and acting as 'playground friends', but staff recognise that there is scope to widen the range of opportunities for pupils to take on extra responsibilities such as these.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Pupils learn well because teaching is good and, sometimes, outstanding. Lessons are well planned and prepared. Teachers are clear about what pupils will learn, although these objectives are not always shared explicitly with pupils. In the vast majority of lessons, the work is modified well to take account of pupils' differing abilities and familiarity with English. Support staff make a very strong contribution during whole class sessions and when pupils are withdrawn to work in groups, as seen in an outstanding lesson in Year 2. Here, pupils of all abilities made excellent progress in writing sentence openings because of the high quality support they received. Teachers question carefully, and this enables them to deal with any misunderstandings as they arise. Pupils reflect thoughtfully on their progress at the end of lessons and are given clear feedback, so that they have a good awareness of their learning and how they might improve.

The interesting and enjoyable curriculum places a strong and successful emphasis on promoting pupils' personal development, enriched by a very good range of clubs, visits, visitors and themed weeks, such as the popular 'monster week'. Sport, as reflected in the school's Activemark award, and music are promoted strongly. Revised approaches to teaching writing have helped to accelerate pupils' progress and the school rightly identifies the need to continue to promote this aspect. Pupils benefit greatly from regular opportunities to share and celebrate each other's cultural heritage.

Every step is taken to ensure that pupils are able to learn in a caring, supportive and exciting environment. Systems to protect potentially vulnerable pupils are very robust. Excellent support is given to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they are able to make rapid progress in their personal development and good

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progress academically. A significant strength is the way that pupils' needs are identified very early, often when they are in the Nursery, so that they are given the extra help they need in class or in withdrawn groups.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has high expectations of herself and the school, and staff and governors share the drive and ambition for providing the best for pupils. A close check is kept on teaching and learning and a new system of recording the comprehensive range of assessments carried out by staff was introduced at the beginning of this year. This is giving staff precise information about the progress of individual pupils, and this is used extremely well to target support where it is most needed and to hold staff to account for pupils' performance. Governors contribute well to self-evaluation processes and have a strong influence on the school's strategic direction. They are particularly rigorous in ensuring that staff and pupils are safe, a considerable factor in the excellent safeguarding procedures. Close checks are made on the suitability of adults to work with children, meticulous records are maintained and the security of the school site is reviewed and improved regularly.

The school sets out to value and include all pupils and succeeds extremely well. As a result, all groups of pupils achieve well. There is no evidence of discrimination and pupils of all backgrounds enjoy very positive relationships. The school promotes community cohesion well, particularly amongst its own community and in the local area. Links are developing further afield, for example with a small rural school and with a school in Belarus, although monitoring of the impact of this work is not yet formalised.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate	
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the Nursery (F1) and Reception (F2) classes is good. There are some outstanding features, particularly in the way that children's personal development is promoted. As a result, children enjoy their time very much and make rapid gains in their confidence and independence. Children make good progress from their starting points, although their attainment by the end of Reception is a little lower than that expected. Staff provide a broad and interesting range of experiences that give a good balance of activities led by an adult and those chosen by the children. The use of the outdoor area has been improved, although the layout for riding wheeled vehicles does not always encourage the development of skills other than riding quickly. Children enjoy taking on responsibilities, for example, by acting as 'traffic police', and they tidy away enthusiastically. Teaching is good and, sometimes, outstanding. Children benefited enormously from an excellent Nursery session where the teacher's lively and imaginative presentation ensured that they quickly grasped the idea of matching objects to toy animals by their rhyming names. Staff have focused on improving children's speaking and listening and this, rightly, remains a priority. The Nursery and Reception team has a good understanding of children's learning and welfare needs, and the setting is well led and managed. Teachers and support staff work together well to check on children's learning and build up helpful profiles of their progress. Excellent links with parents and carers ensure that children settle quickly into life in school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

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Those parents and carers returning the questionnaire are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work and very few disagree with the statements included in the consultation. All indicate that the school keeps their children safe and able to lead a healthy lifestyle, and feel that the teaching is good and the school is well led and managed. Inspectors agree with parents' and carers' positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's Fields Infant and Nursery School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 42 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 196 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	79	8	19	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	90	4	10	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	71	8	19	3	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	60	14	33	3	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	74	11	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	67	11	26	3	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	60	17	40	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	22	52	14	33	2	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	57	14	33	2	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	52	17	40	2	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	55	14	33	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	69	11	26	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	69	11	26	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Fields Infant and Nursery School, Leicester LE3 2DA

I am writing to thank you for the friendly way you welcomed us to your school when we visited recently, and to tell you what we found out. Lots of you and your parents and carers told us that you go to a good school. We agree and it has many strengths.

You enjoy school very much and you work very hard. Because of this, you are making good progress in your work.

Your headteacher, staff and governors take excellent care of you. They make sure that you are very safe and they work really well with your parents and carers to help give you the best.

You have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy; you get on very well together and behave well.

Your teachers make lessons interesting and enjoyable. They know you really well and keep a close check on how well you are learning.

Even though your school is good, your headteacher and the other adults want it to be even better. We have asked them to do two things.

We want your staff to check carefully how well they are helping you to understand how different communities get along in United Kingdom and around the world.

We want them to work with your parents to make sure that all of you come to school regularly. Remember, the more you come to school, the more you learn.

We know you will want to help by continuing to work hard, behave well and enjoy school. We wish you good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Williams

Lead inspector

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