

St Mary's CE VC Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126339
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	340962
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2009
Reporting inspector	David Curtis

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Bob Toogood
Headteacher	Lorraine Hurley
Date of previous school inspection	8 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, the school council, other pupils and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, safeguarding policies and the views of 68 parents and four staff who completed questionnaires.

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

- the impact of provision, especially the use of assessment and its impact, on raising standards in Year 1
- the reasons why, for the last three years, standards at the end of Year 2 have been higher in writing than in reading
- the effectiveness of the governing body in holding the school to account for the standards it achieves and the effectiveness of its procedures for safeguarding pupils.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than the average infant school. In Reception and Years 1 and 2, there is a specialist learning centre for pupils with complex learning needs. In addition, there is a specialist learning centre for pre-school children with complex learning needs of whom a high proportion have speech, language and communication difficulties. Most pupils are of White British background with a very small minority from minority ethnic families. Ten pupils are at the early stage of learning English as an additional language.

The acting headteacher, who was appointed by the local authority pending the appointment of a headteacher by the governing body, joined the school on 1 September 2009. Privately managed after-school provision on the school site did not form part of this inspection.

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

1

Main findings

This is a good school. An outstanding feature is the drive, ambition and determination to raise standards shown by the acting headteacher, senior leaders and all staff.

Fundamental to school improvement is the rigorous and in-depth analysis of the progress of all groups in the school by gender, ability and ethnicity. As a result of this excellent analysis, intervention and challenging extension programmes are put in place for all pupils. Consequently, standards have improved significantly since the previous inspection. In the most recent teacher assessments for pupils in Year 2, all groups performed better than similar groups nationally. The school has an accurate and detailed picture of its own performance and this, together with its track record of improvement, shows that the school has outstanding capacity for future improvement.

Children make an excellent start to school because of the outstanding provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially in the high-quality teaching of key basic skills. As the result of consistently effective teaching in Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress and achieve above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. There are examples of writing, especially stories, that are of a high standard. Through its rigorous self-analysis, the school recognises that a relentless focus on writing meant that for the last three years standards in writing were marginally higher than those in reading. The implementation of the 'Every Child a Reader' campaign, together with the library and classrooms promoting a love of reading, show the school's determination to redress the balance. The analysis of pupils' progress in reading is exceptionally good and is used successfully to plan next steps. Pupils are engaged in this process and most know and understand their group targets. However, teachers do not involve pupils sufficiently in setting precise individual targets with feedback that would tell them, for example, how to move from being a Level 2 reader to a Level 3 reader.

Teaching in Year 1 is good and there is very good evidence of the teaching of key literacy and numeracy skills. A particular strength in Year 1 is teachers' expectations that pupils use their literacy skills in other subjects, with the result that they produce some very good work in their topic books. However, in Years 1 and 2 pupils do not spend enough time using information and communication technology to support their learning in other subjects. Pupils work very hard in lessons and the amount of high-quality writing they produce is truly impressive. They feel totally safe and secure in school and have an excellent understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The school council plays a significant role in school life, including contributing to the job description for candidates applying for the post of headteacher.

Partnerships with parents, carers and outside agencies are outstanding and have a significant impact on the school's success. Pupils in the specialist learning centres

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benefit from outstanding provision and support from teachers, staff and outside specialist help. As a result, these pupils make excellent progress based on their starting points.

Despite significant recent changes in its membership, the governing body is very supportive of the school and in holding it to account for the standards it achieves. Governors are particularly effective in seeking the views of parents and responding to these. Currently, many of the governing body's policies are new and insufficient rigour is given to ensuring that all policies are up to date and/or reviewed on a regular and systematic basis. Parents are very supportive of the school and all who returned the questionnaires agreed that they are happy with their children's experiences at school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the use of group targets in literacy and numeracy to individual targets to give pupils an even better understanding of their next steps in learning.
- Ensure that by 31 March 2010 the governing body implements a planned programme for reviewing and updating policies on an annual or bi-annual basis.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology to support their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils work exceptionally hard in lessons and show impressive levels of independence and concentration. During the two days of the inspection, pupils in Years 1 and 2 made excellent progress in completing the first and second chapters of their stories. In Year 1 pupils are very confident to stand in front of their classmates and, for example, explain confidently their mathematical understanding of patterns when counting forwards and backwards in tens. Pupils contribute positively to whole-class discussions. They listen to each other sensibly and value the opinions of others. Because all pupils are challenged in lessons, they make consistently good progress in their learning. There is no significant difference in the performance of groups because teachers and teaching assistants support all learners effectively. Pupils in the specialist learning centre make excellent progress in their learning because of very effective teaching.

Because pupils clearly enjoy their school so much, their attendance is above average. Behaviour is good throughout the school, with exemplary behaviour observed in a few lessons. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community through the effective school council and taking part in events, such as singing to senior citizens. A most interesting and illuminating insight into the school's success came from the school council. When asked what they most like about the school, the majority replied with one word, 'Work'. Equally, when asked what they would like to see improved, there was a unanimous response, 'The taps in the toilets.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, with strengths in the way pupils have total confidence in expressing their thoughts and feelings. The Christian ethos comes through very strongly in pupils' day-to-day life in school, and pupils from all

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backgrounds work and play happily together.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils. Their planning is good, with strengths in ensuring that the needs of all pupils are met, especially the more able who are challenged in their learning. A striking feature is the way in which teachers amend their daily planning based on their assessment of the previous day's learning. Teachers have high expectations of the amount of work pupils should achieve in lessons and the way in which it should be presented. Teaching assistants provide high-quality support, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that these pupils play a full part in all lessons. All pupils have individual and group targets in literacy and numeracy. These are not regularly updated and pupils are not always told when they achieve them. For example, pupils in Year 2 had targets in numeracy linked to adding number bonds to 20, yet work in their books showed they were solving division problems which included a remainder. Targets are not precise enough to guide pupils to the next levels they need to reach in literacy and numeracy. In the specialist

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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learning centre, staff track the progress of pupils in great detail and use the results to set challenging individual targets.

The curriculum is stimulating and exciting, with themes, such as 'Antarctica' really engaging and capturing the imagination of pupils, especially boys. As a result, they are motivated to write in a range of styles and for different purposes. While there are excellent expectations that pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects, the use of information and communication technology is not so well embedded. Pupils benefit from an excellent range of visits and visitors, with, for example, the visit to the 'Living Rainforest' providing stimulating and memorable learning experiences. The success of the programme to support social and emotional aspects of learning has a positive impact on strengths in pupils' personal development.

Parents are very happy that the school cares for their children successfully.

Arrangements for induction into the school are particularly strong and the 'Parents' Board' in each classroom encourages parents to support the school in their children's learning. There is especially effective support for pupils in the specialist learning centres.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Despite instability in staffing and leadership and management, the school maintained a distinct upward trend in the standards pupils achieved during the previous academic year. This feature is testimony to the effectiveness of the senior leadership team in driving school improvement. Since her appointment, the acting headteacher has brought even greater rigour and challenge to the senior leadership team. As a result, their enthusiasm and dedication to improve the performance of all pupils is most impressive. There is a genuine team ethos in the school, involving the whole staff team in the drive to become an outstanding school.

The way in which the school promotes equality of opportunity and eliminates discrimination is outstanding. As a result, all pupils are fully engaged in all aspects of the school's day-to-day life which contributes to a fully inclusive and harmonious school community. Safeguarding procedures, including child protection, are robust and monitored rigorously by the headteacher. All required policies are fully up to date, although governors have not always been sufficiently proactive in ensuring all policies have been in the past. The school promotes community cohesion effectively. It is very much an integral part of the community it serves and although a Church of England

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school, it openly welcomes representatives of other churches to lead collective worship. Through themed weeks and engagement of parents of other faiths, pupils have good opportunities to learn, for example, what it is like to be part of a Muslim family.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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

Children across the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy their time in school and make outstanding progress. During 'Circle Time' in Reception, children show very good speaking and listening skills and recognise the importance of valuing the contribution of the person who is speaking. In a 'letters and sounds' session on the 'ch' sound, children took immense delight in going outdoors (in torrential rain) to go on a 'treasure hunt' to find the 'ch' words that their teacher had hidden for them. Children show impressive levels of concentration, for example in making models from construction kits or using a range of creative materials to make their 'Christmas wrapping paper'.

There are significant strengths in the teaching of key skills, especially letters and sounds which contribute to outstanding progress in communication, language and literacy. Relationships with all adults are excellent, with teaching assistants playing a vital role in supporting and developing children's learning. High-quality questioning is particularly effective in challenging the children to explain their thinking and so develop their very good speaking and listening skills. Resources, including the exciting outdoor learning area, are used imaginatively and creatively to support children's learning.

Very effective leadership and management ensure that the Reception classes work as one unit, with similar high-quality leadership for children in the specialist learning centre.

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A significant strength in both settings is the quality of partnerships with parents and the school valuing parents as true partners in their children's learning. Similarly, those children who require specialist support have their needs met most effectively through the high-quality partnerships with outside agencies.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Less than half of parents returned the questionnaire, but these were mainly very supportive of the school. Inspection findings underpin the positive features identified by parents, especially in relation to the quality of teaching and their children's enjoyment of school. Remarks, such as, 'My child is very happy at St Mary's', and, 'There is a real sense of community here and they (staff) are all approachable and take on board suggestions you may have', reflect the views of those parents who made written comments. Evidence from the inspection does not support the concerns raised by a very few parents. However, individual concerns were shared with the school although no individual parent was identified.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's CE VC Infant 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 148 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	76	14	21	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	47	69	19	28	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	37	54	29	43	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	63	22	32	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	46	68	22	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	60	25	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	60	26	38	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)	41	60	19	28	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	65	22	32	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	53	24	35	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	65	19	28	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	44	65	21	31	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	76	16	24	0	0	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



3 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's CE VC Infant School, Marlborough SN8 4BX

Thank you very much for the very warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you, especially in lessons. I would like to thank the school council for meeting me at lunchtime and I have, as I promised you, mentioned your concerns about the taps in the toilets to your chair of governors. I am delighted to tell you that you go to a good school and here are some of the reasons why.

- You get off to a really great start in Reception.
- Those of you in the specialist learning centres make excellent progress.
- By the end of Year 2 the work you do in reading, writing and mathematics is much better than many seven-year-olds can do.
- You have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe in school.
- You have excellent relationships with your teachers.
- Those who lead and manage your school work extremely hard to help you make good progress and produce examples of really good work, especially in writing.

In order to make your school even better, I have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to:

- give you individual targets in literacy and numeracy to help you understand how you can improve your work
- make sure that your governors keep all their important paperwork (called policies) up to date so that they do their job properly
- give you more time to use computers to support your learning.

Yours sincerely

David Curtis

Lead Inspector

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