

St Mary and All Saints Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110002
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	337420
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Marion Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	403
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Symonds
Headteacher	Mr Robert Howell
Date of previous school inspection	10 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 30 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including the school single plan, assessment information, safeguarding documentation, curricular planning, a sample of pupils' writing and records of lesson observations. In addition, 55 pupil questionnaires, 66 parent questionnaires and 30 staff questionnaires were received and analysed.

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

- the impact of teaching and the curriculum on the learning and progress of different groups of pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the impact of the actions the school has taken on improving attainment, learning and progress in writing
- the effectiveness of subject leaders in monitoring and supporting their subject areas.

Information about the school

This is a very large school. The closure of a nearby school in 2004 led to a rapid expansion of the school population. Almost half the school population are from a range of minority ethnic groups, the largest of which is of Black African origin. A small number of pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The school has gained the Activemark, Healthy School Award, Financial Management Standard in Schools and Basic Skills Mark.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school which is held in high regard by parents. It has made significant improvements because of strong leadership by the headteacher, supported well by the senior team and governors. Attainment and attendance have risen and are now broadly average. All groups of pupils achieve well in their academic learning, as well as in their personal development. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The level of exclusions has dropped significantly because behaviour is now good. Planning for improvement is good and is based on an accurate view of the work of the school as a result of robust self-evaluation practices. Staff work well to promote an ethos of care, mutual respect and high expectations. There is good capacity to sustain these improvements. The school promotes its motto, 'Working together, learning together, growing together', in all its actions and is a diverse, harmonious community.

Other key contributory factors to this success are:

- well-paced teaching which provides pupils with a good level of challenge and motivates them to learn
- a flexible, lively curriculum which is frequently reviewed to ensure it matches pupils' needs and interests
- sensitive care and guidance which help pupils to overcome barriers to progress.

A small minority of lessons are satisfactory. In these lessons, support staff are not consistently deployed effectively and occasionally lack the support and guidance needed to manage challenging behaviour. Marking is excellent, especially in writing, and provides explicit guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. However, teachers do not consistently provide opportunities for pupils to follow this advice. Standards in writing are much improved, but opportunities are not yet sufficiently well planned for pupils to consolidate their writing skills through practice across different subject areas.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of writing further by September 2010 by providing structured opportunities to write in lessons across the curriculum.
- Increase the number of good lessons by September 2010 by ensuring that:
 - pupils consistently have the opportunity to follow up the guidance provided in marking
 - support staff are deployed effectively in class and have guidance from teachers when needed, to help them manage challenging behaviour.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of skills that are well below those expected for their age. By Year 6, attainment is broadly average. Attainment has risen substantially in science, mathematics and reading as a result of the effective strategies the school has put in place. For example, ensuring that younger pupils read to an adult on a regular basis has improved children’s confidence and skills. There have been significant improvements in writing as well, especially for boys, but standards remain below average.

Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, were seen to be making good progress in lessons during the inspection. Pupils of Black African origin, who have very positive attitudes to learning, and those pupils at the early stages of learning English, who benefit from very effective and well targeted support, make particularly rapid progress. Pupils work hard and enjoy their learning. They concentrate well, making thoughtful contributions to class and group discussion. Work in books is neatly presented, showing pride and care, even when handwriting is not well developed. Behaviour is good and pupils with severe behavioural difficulties learn to manage their behaviour better as they progress through school. Very occasionally, however, these pupils become distracted and this slows the pace of their learning.

Pupils develop as well-rounded young people who are soundly prepared for the next stage of their lives by the gains they make in basic and social skills, and their regular participation in sport and healthy eating habits. Spiritual development is particularly strong and pupils take advantage of the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings in their ‘reflection’ books. They show respect for the diverse range of faiths and cultures represented within the school. While there is some occasional bullying and boisterous behaviour, this is dealt with well and has improved rapidly over the past year. Pupils make a good contribution to improving behaviour at lunchtime when play leaders involve younger children in learning new games. Most pupils attend regularly and attendance is broadly average.

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	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	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

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

The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good relationships between staff and pupils motivate pupils to learn. Clear objectives make pupils aware of the purpose of lessons and lessons proceed at a brisk pace. Most lessons present pupils with a good level of challenge, helping them to extend and develop their ideas through skilful questioning. The skills-based curriculum provides a wealth of exciting experiences, such as forest walks and visits to the seaside, and has been successful in encouraging pupils, especially boys, to write. However, some opportunities are missed to develop children's writing skills through other subjects, such as science. Through activities such as Arts Week, the school promotes understanding of the cultures represented within the school and beyond. Increasingly flexible arrangements, for example mixed-age ability groups, have accelerated the learning of pupils of all abilities. In a mathematics/information and communication technology (ICT) lesson, for example, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities responded with enthusiasm to demanding questioning, justifying their decisions extremely well.

The school, in effective partnership with families and other agencies such as the nearby Children's Centre, successfully promotes a caring and supportive ethos. These partnerships support the health and well-being of all pupils. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at the early stages of learning English meets their needs well. Transition arrangements are carefully planned and are appreciated by parents. Robust systems have led to improved attendance and behaviour, and led to a sharp reduction in the number of exclusions, but are not yet fully embedded.

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?

The headteacher has won the commitment and raised the expectations and ambition of the whole school community through a rigorous target-setting process. Monitoring and evaluation by subject leaders, many of whom are new to their roles, are at the early stages but improving rapidly. Pupils' progress is regularly tracked and assessment information is used well by the senior team to inform curricular planning.

Equal opportunities are at the core of all the school’s activities and all pupils are helped to succeed. Arrangements for safeguarding are secure and are carefully checked by governors, who have considerable expertise in this area. Good arrangements are in place to support the most vulnerable children, enhanced by careful record-keeping and effective links with other agencies. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and talk to staff when they are worried.

The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion, especially in relation to promoting understanding and respect for the range of faiths and cultures in contemporary Britain. This strong ethos of care and respect permeates the work of the school. An audit, undertaken in conjunction with parents, also identifies strengths in links with the local community, for example local churches. Global links are not quite as well developed.

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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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 Early Years Foundation Stage is good. It is led and managed well and staff work as an effective team. A high level of attention is paid to ensuring children are safe. On arrival in the nursery, children have limited skills, especially in language development, but all groups make good progress towards the early learning goals. They make particularly good progress in personal development, but communication skills remain limited when they enter Year 1. Key workers support children well and form warm and trusting relationships with children and their parents. Good care for children’s welfare begins on home visits before they arrive. Children enjoy their learning and behave well. Their concentration and engagement in activities are sustained, for example in the ‘post office’. They learn the importance of safety in the ‘builder’s yard’ and develop independence. The quality of adult support for learning is good and the well-planned indoor and outdoor learning

environment and curriculum are rich in opportunities for pupils to develop their language, particularly in writing. Adult-led activities build well on child-led play, because staff are well aware of children’s needs. However, the narrow range of materials for imaginative construction limits children’s creativity.

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

Parents are very positive in their support for the work of the school. The inspection team agrees with the high value parents place on the care the school provides to ensure children are safe, enjoy school and make enough progress in their learning. A number expressed some disquiet about the way unacceptable behaviour is managed. In the main, unacceptable behaviour is dealt with well, but, in common with most schools, there are a few occasions when it is not dealt with quite as effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary and All Saints Church of England Primary 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 66 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 403 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	45.4	33	50	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	39.4	39	59.1	1	1.5	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	19	28.8	43	65.2	3	4.5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	39.4	36	54.5	3	4.5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	28.8	44	66.7	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	23	34.8	41	62.1	1	1.5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	36.4	40	60.6	0	0	1	1.5
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)	17	25.8	40	60.6	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	16	24.2	41	62.1	3	4.5	1	1.5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	28.2	36	54.5	6	9.1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	30.3	34	51.5	5	7.6	1	1.5
The school is led and managed effectively	26	34.0	34	39.4	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	29	35	35	43.9	1	1.5	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 all 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

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>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 pupils' 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.



25 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary and All Saints Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Reading, RG1 6DU

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. Your views and those of your parents and carers were very useful to us in coming to our judgements. A lot of you told us you enjoyed school, so you will be pleased to know we agree that it provides you with a good education. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well, because provision is led well and teaching and the programme of activities are good. Children develop good social skills too, because of the good care the team of staff provide.

Across the school we were impressed with:

- the good progress you make, your achievement and enjoyment of learning
- your improved attendance and good behaviour and the way you reflect on your experiences
- the secure arrangements the school has in place to ensure you are safe and happy
- good teaching which provides you with a good level of challenge and makes you think
- the lively curriculum, which is very flexible in meeting your needs and interests and provides you with lots of opportunities for exciting trips and experiences
- the way you understand and respect each other's beliefs and way of life
- the strong leadership of the headteacher who, together with the staff, is working hard to make sure things continue to improve.

In order to make things even better, we have asked the staff to provide more opportunities for you to improve your writing in all areas of the curriculum, like science, for example. We have also asked staff to provide you with time to follow the advice they give you when they mark your work, and to make sure that all staff are helping you as well as they can in lessons.

It was nice to meet you all and we hope you will continue to enjoy your education as much as you do now.

Yours faithfully

Marion Thompson
Lead inspector

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