

St Mary's Church of England Controlled Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123137
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	292592
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2007
Reporting inspector	John Earish

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 on roll	79
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs F G Roberts
Headteacher	Mrs V Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2001
School address	Church Green Witney OX28 4AZ
Telephone number	01993 702387
Fax number	01993 704580

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school admits pupils from a variety of social backgrounds. Almost all are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. When children start school, their skills and abilities are broadly similar to those expected of four year olds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is well below that found nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Mary's is a very caring school whose overall effectiveness is currently satisfactory. It is held in very high regard by the parents and has a number of strengths. The care, guidance and support of pupils are good and the pastoral aspects are outstanding. There are very strong partnerships with parents and the community to promote learners' well-being. More than one parent commented about 'the traditional values' that the school upholds and 'the extremely welcoming and friendly atmosphere where all the children learn and play happily together'. One mother explained that her son was so looking forward to starting at St Mary's that he already had his uniform despite still being only 3 years old!

Pupils attend very regularly, enjoy school and make good progress in their personal and social skills. The promotion of these qualities starts with the good achievement of children in the Foundation Stage. In the rest of the school, academic achievement is satisfactory. However, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress and achieve well. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education through very good links with the local primary school. They leave with average standards overall, although standards in reading are good. The percentage achieving the higher level 3 in writing and mathematics could be higher.

The teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. Several good lessons were observed during the inspection illustrating the success of recent initiatives to improve the quality of teaching. The teachers present their lessons well and are now making better use of the new tracking systems to identify pupils in danger of underachieving and to provide additional help and support for them quickly. In addition, a good start has been made to raise the levels of challenge for higher attaining pupils by increasing the opportunities for them to work independently on tasks that extend their reasoning and thinking skills. It is too soon to judge the full impact of this.

The curriculum is of good quality. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities which pupils thoroughly enjoy. The school is adjusting the curriculum to provide more links between subjects to make learning more interesting and purposeful, drawing on pupils' different skills and interests in literacy and numeracy and providing more opportunities for writing for different purposes. Pupils' personal development is promoted well and they have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and staying safe. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are included in all activities.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory but the educational direction provided has not yet ensured that all the pupils make consistently good progress in all classes. The school has correctly identified a number of priorities for development and has made a good start at implementing them. The headteacher is enabling staff to have a clearer view of standards across the school and a greater influence over the quality of teaching and learning to ensure greater consistency in pupils' progress. The governing body provides useful support for school initiatives and ensures that it meets its legal responsibilities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing and mathematics by ensuring that higher attaining pupils have more opportunities to become active and independent learners.
- Build on the good start made at using the curriculum more imaginatively to foster and encourage children as writers.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Children typically start school with skills and abilities that are similar to those normally expected of four year olds. The children settle quickly to school routines and make good progress in the Foundation Stage. This prepares them well for work in Year 1.

Progress in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory overall and standards are broadly average, although standards in reading are good. Initiatives to build on pupils' good progress in the Foundation Stage are making an impact and the percentage achieving the higher level 3 is likely to increase this year. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because of the good support they receive. The school recognises that it needs to continue to work hard to increase the numbers achieving the higher levels in writing and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and show a good awareness of personal safety and the well being of others. This is clearly seen at playtime when, despite the limited space available, they play freely while at the same time showing great consideration for one another. Behaviour is extremely good throughout the school, due to high expectations and very good relationships between all members of its community.

Pupils make useful contributions to the day to day running of the school by sensibly undertaking responsible jobs, and also show a responsibility towards the wider community. For instance, pupils raise money for a number of local and national charities and older pupils act as playground friends to those who can't find someone to play with them. Attendance rates are well above the national average, and illustrate the pupils' extremely positive attitudes towards their learning. While basic skills are satisfactory, pupils work together cooperatively and leave the school as confident well-rounded individuals.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory but there are missed opportunities for pupils to work independently and think for themselves. This means challenge for the higher attainers is not always sufficient to enable them to achieve as well as they should. The school is taking action to improve this and it is proving successful when teachers and teaching assistants encourage pupils to reflect on their learning. Teachers present their lessons well using questions effectively to assess and extend pupils' learning. They engage and maintain pupils' interest through effective use of computers and interactive whiteboards. However, the impact of the good teaching observed during the inspection is not reflected fully in pupils' progress over time. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is well focused with many opportunities for children to find

out for themselves through imaginative or creative play and, as a result, children make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well, including those with learning difficulties. Much time has been spent revising the curriculum to promote creativity and enjoyment, and especially the awareness of environmental issues and its relevance to pupils' lives. Teachers are increasingly making use of the pupils' enthusiasm for these activities to develop their abilities to write for different audiences and purposes across all subjects. In addition, the school has introduced opportunities each week for higher attaining pupils to work independently to develop their skills as writers.

The school ensures that all pupils have many opportunities to participate and enjoy a good range of enrichment activities despite its very small size. Such experiences, together with good provision for personal, social and health education, and the emphasis on staying safe and healthy, develop in pupils a good sense of personal and social responsibility.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of pupils are good and the pastoral aspects are outstanding, reflecting the strong Christian ethos of the school. Pupils identified with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well and good links with outside agencies contribute to this. This enables them to take a full part in all activities and to achieve well. Systems to ensure pupils' health and safety are reviewed regularly and child protection procedures are robust and widely understood. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure. Pupils' academic progress is monitored carefully and teachers are now making better use of assessment information to plan their next steps of learning to ensure that it is sufficiently challenging. This is helping to raise the achievement of higher attaining pupils. Pupils are set targets, but they are not always sure about how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

There is good capacity for future improvement. The headteacher and her staff have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and work well together as a team. They are clearly committed to raising standards and have identified key priorities for improvement through a clear school development plan. This provides a useful framework for action and review although success criteria could be sharper.

The school's process for self-evaluation takes account of the views of others including pupils and parents and is accurate. The number of staff is small which means that each teacher has considerable responsibilities for leading developments in more than one subject. This has been recognised by the headteacher who has recently reorganised the senior management team so staff can develop a clearer view of standards across the school and a greater influence over the quality of teaching and learning. This is helping to raise achievement overall. Governors are keen for the school to do well and hold the school to account for its work. They have ambitious

plans to provide a self-contained Foundation Stage Unit but have yet to secure sufficient funds to start building work.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Controlled Infant School, Witney, OX28 4AZ

Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed me to your school when I visited recently. Many of you spoke to me and showed me your work and you gave me lots of helpful information. This letter is to tell you what I found out.

- Your school is friendly and welcoming. Your behaviour is excellent and you get on very well with each other.
- You told me that you enjoy school and, watching you in lessons, I can see that you work hard and try to do your best.
- All of the grown ups in school look after each of you very well so that you feel safe and happy. You told me that you know they will always help you if you are upset or worried.
- You willingly raise money for charities so they can help those who are less fortunate.
- You also told me that you like to take on extra responsibilities and to help others. You are pleased that the school listens to you and acts on your ideas.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory education. You are doing well in lessons but I agree with your teachers that, with some improvements, some of you could learn even more. I have asked your teachers to focus on making the work harder especially for those of you who finish your work quickly. I have also asked the teachers to think of ways of helping you to write imaginatively in all your lessons.

Yours truly,

John Earish

Lead Inspector