

# St Mary's Bluecoat CofE (VA) Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123536
<b>Local Authority</b>	Shropshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	292703
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Rodney Braithwaite

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	256
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	A P Shaw
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sue Farrell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 January 2002
<b>School address</b>	Lodge Lane The Grove Bridgnorth WV15 5EQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01746 763455
<b>Fax number</b>	01746 767435

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

In this above-average-sized school, a higher proportion of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities than seen nationally. Children start school with skill and ability levels which are generally lower than those expected for their age. The headteacher was appointed in September 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is an improving school that provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of its effectiveness. Strategies geared towards improving identified areas of weakness are making a positive difference, for example, in reversing a decline in standards at the end of Key Stage 1. There are still areas to work on but the school has pinpointed exactly what these are and is building for success. The school works well in partnership with others to promote the well-being of its pupils. Younger children have a good start in school. A stimulating curriculum and good teaching enables these children to make good progress through the Nursery and Reception classes. In all areas of their learning, children are at the level expected by the time they go into Year 1. Between Years 1 and 6, progress is satisfactory for most pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities. However, the needs of more-able learners are not consistently well met because they are not always challenged sufficiently. Writing is the weakest aspect of English because pupils have too few opportunities to develop their skills through extended writing. The achievement of younger boys, which has been consistently below that of girls, is improving following recent action by the school. Pupils reach average standards by the end of Year 6.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and, together with the satisfactory curriculum, are helping pupils build secure basic skills and grow as responsible young people. Teachers plan together consistently but do not give pupils enough guidance through marking and target setting on how they can improve their work. Assessment procedures have improved, but are sometimes not used well by teachers. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory, leading to pupils' satisfactory personal development and well-being. Pupils are given good opportunities to develop a healthy lifestyle and learn about improving their local environment. They accept these with relish, and learning is good when they study the school grounds and forest area. They enjoy school, have good attendance and like making contributions to improvement through the newly created School Council.

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The improvements in school action planning and the monitoring of teaching and learning show that the school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. Subject leaders are keen to develop their roles and to become more accountable for raising standards and achievement, but at present have insufficient time allocated to do this. Parents are on board as partners in education, with the great majority being very positive about the education the school is offering. Value for money is satisfactory.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by ensuring that able pupils, in particular, are set work that is matched to their ability.
- Ensure all teachers make more effective use of assessment to guide pupils on how they can improve their work.
- Give staff time to monitor and evaluate standards in the subjects for which they have responsibility.
- Give pupils more opportunities across the curriculum to use and develop their writing skills.

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**

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. From a below-average start, children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and meet the goals expected of them by the time they move into Year 1. Standards in the 2006 national tests were below average at the end of Year 2 and showed a declining trend. A significant proportion of boys did not reach the levels of which they were capable. The school has worked to reverse this trend through, for example, additional support for those pupils who fall behind. As a result, current standards in Year 2 are at the level expected and reflect the better progress pupils are now making.

Standards have been average at the end of Year 6 for some years. However, the school's data indicates that this year more pupils are expected to reach the higher Level 5 in mathematics than in previous years. School leaders recognise that additional work is required to further improve achievement in English, particularly for more able learners. Standards in writing are lower than other elements of English because pupils do not have enough opportunities for extended writing. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make satisfactory progress through the school because of the support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils are happy at school and attendance is good. Pupils feel safe in school because they say people are kind to each other and bullying is not a problem. They know staff listen and help if they have any worries but some pupils think the school could be more receptive to their ideas. School councillors take their role seriously, but otherwise pupils have few opportunities to take on responsibilities around the school. Behaviour is satisfactory overall, and is better when pupils are interested and challenged in their lessons.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The Eco Committee is very active and pupils are keen to protect the environment through recycling and re-using materials. From Reception onwards, pupils grow vegetables using the school's own compost and this supports well their adoption of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils have gained a gold Activemark and appreciate how the school helps them keep fit. Skills for future economic well-being are satisfactory. Most pupils work co-operatively alongside their classmates and act considerately towards each other.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Consistently good teaching in the Foundation Stage results in children achieving well. Activities are well planned and actively engage all the children. Adults are good role models and are an effective team.

In Years 1 to 6, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Relationships are good in all classes and teachers set clear guidelines for the behaviour of their pupils. Pupils learn well in practical activities, such as when they visit the forest area. Some lessons, though, can be pedestrian, causing pupils to lose concentration and interest. More-able pupils do not always make as much progress as they could because they are not set challenging enough tasks. A new marking policy

has been introduced but is not consistently applied in every class in guiding pupils to understand how they can improve.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

A good range of visits, external visitors and extra-curricular activities enhances the opportunities for pupils, especially in music and sports. All areas of the curriculum for children in Nursery and Reception are covered well. Particularly good use of the outdoor area encourages children's natural curiosity so they want to explore and find out more. The school places a high priority on personal, social and health education and this is helping pupils know how to keep healthy and safe. Information and communication technology (ICT) is being used satisfactorily to support pupils' learning but there remains a shortage of resources, which the school is in the process of redressing. The curriculum is suitably adapted to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. However, not enough is done to cater for the needs of more-able pupils. There are also too few opportunities for pupils to use and develop their writing skills in subjects other than English.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The school has thorough systems to ensure the safeguarding of all pupils. Child protection arrangements are robust. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are well cared for and the school makes good use of external agencies to support the most vulnerable.

Academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory because, although staff know the pupils well, there are areas of weakness. Challenging targets have been set for Year 6 pupils. Target setting is a recent initiative in other year groups and is not fully embedded. There is insufficient use of assessment to track pupils' progress over time, resulting in subject leaders not always having a clear picture of the progress being made by different groups of learners.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher has promoted a strong drive to raise standards. She has been a positive influence in guiding the school through a number of changes over the last year. The leadership team is ensuring that these changes are at the heart of the school's continuing improvement. The school has evaluated its performance accurately and staff have a good understanding of where the school is heading. They have worked enthusiastically to implement many of the new initiatives but realise that they still have further to go. Those with subject leadership responsibilities have not been given enough time to monitor progress and standards. The school is prioritising an improvement in some resources, including ICT, having overcome a recent financial deficit. The governing body is supportive and has a satisfactory knowledge of the school's strengths and needs. It has until recently tended to accept information provided to it and has not always challenged school leaders sufficiently.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

28 June 2007

Dear Children,

Inspection of St Mary's C of E Bluecoat (VA) Primary School, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, WV15 5EQ

Thank you very much for being so helpful to us when we visited your school. We were pleased so many of you wanted to talk to us, and were so polite and friendly. We were also pleased that nearly all of you like going to school and enjoy most of your lessons. You are rightly proud of your lovely school grounds and the garden and forest where you have some lessons. We think you take care of each other really well. You certainly know lots about how you become and stay healthy. You are proud of your new School Council, although we were interested to hear you say that you think you could have more responsibilities. We thought you would like to know some of the things we found out about your school.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are doing well, because the teachers and helpers know what they all need to learn even better. Those of you in the rest of the school are learning about as well as most children of your age. We think that some of you could do better though. We would like to see teachers give you more help to understand how you can do this and reach the targets they agree with you. We think your writing would be better if you had more opportunities to use what you learn in literacy to write more in other subjects. We also think that some of you are sometimes given work that is too easy, and so we have asked teachers to make sure it stretches you a bit more. Some of the teachers with special responsibilities for how you learn need a bit more time to work with your headteacher on how they can do this. We know that you get on so well with your teachers that you will really try hard with their help. Your school knows that you are short of equipment for ICT and because you enjoy it so much, you should be getting more computers and laptops so that you can improve your skills.

You are in school where everybody on the staff is really keen to help you improve. With your help and enthusiasm we are confident that this will happen. Enjoy your learning!

Best wishes,

Rod Braithwaite Lead Inspector