

St Mary's C of E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113385
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	338158
Inspection dates	15–16 October 2009
Reporting inspector	David Carrington

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	334
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jerry Hope
Headteacher	Robert Fancourt
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2006
School address	Chanters Road Bideford Devon EX39 2QN
Telephone number	01237 477288
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Email address	admin@st-marys-bideford.devon.sch.uk

Registered childcare provision	St Mary's After-School Club
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	20
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, and held meetings with governors, members of staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at curriculum planning, information from the monitoring of pupils' progress and the quality of provision, samples of pupils' work, assessment and attendance data and school improvement planning. Ninety-two parental questionnaires were evaluated.

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

- The degree to which the school has improved achievement in writing and mathematics.
- How far there have been improvements in provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The effectiveness of the use of assessment to help pupils make improved progress.
- How well the after-school club is providing for the children.

Information about the school

St Mary's C of E Primary School is larger than most schools that cater for 4 to 11-year-old pupils. Most pupils are from White British families and hardly any speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is considerably higher than is usual. Most of these pupils have speech and language, and social, emotional and behavioural needs. About a quarter of the pupils do not complete their whole primary education at the school.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are included in the two Reception classes. Along with older pupils, some of the reception children attend the St Mary's After-School Club which is managed by the governors. This started in June 2009 and was inspected for the first time by the team.

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 C of E Primary is a good school. It is improving well and has a number of notable features. Its main strengths include:

- Pupils play and work happily together and enjoy their time in school. They work hard in lessons and make good progress. Learning is fun and well motivating and enables pupils to reach above average standards.
- Children start in Reception with low levels of skills and knowledge. They make a brisk start to their education and progress well. By the end of Reception most of them reach the targets expected for children of their age.
- Behaviour is good and pupils get on well with each other. They have good awareness of how to keep healthy and stay safe. Attendance is close to average and pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education.
- The quality of teaching is good. The pace of work is brisk, productivity levels are good and pupils concentrate well. Teachers use questioning expertly to develop knowledge and skills. Teaching assistants give good support to their pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, which means these pupils are as successful as the others.
- The curriculum is well planned to cater for pupils of all ages and ability ranges, including in the mixed-age classes. The school has a very good sporting tradition and many pupils achieve highly in swimming, games and physical education. Music also has a high profile.
- Pupils are well cared for and given good guidance. The school has developed particularly strong partnerships with parents and other agencies in its work to help all pupils do well. The school safeguards all children well.
- The after-school club is well organised and managed, and although the numbers present are sometimes low, the children enjoy the activities immensely and benefit from their time there.
- The headteacher sets high expectations of staff and pupils. They respond positively and share his determination to do well. Senior leaders and the governors know how well the school is performing and tackle weaknesses with urgency. The school has clearly raised its aspirations, as seen in the challenging targets set for pupils.
- School leaders have a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school because systems to monitor and evaluate its work and to track pupils' progress are rigorous and smart. This enables pupils who only complete part of their primary education at the school to make as good progress as those who are present all through.

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- The school promotes community cohesion well. Staff and governors review and update policy and practice as needed to ensure all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed in their work and to work happily with other people, whether from the local community or through the school's international links.
- Efforts to bring continuous improvement pervade the school's work. There is a good track record of improvements to standards, pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has moved from satisfactory to good effectiveness in the last three years and has good capacity to sustain its improvement.

Two main areas stand out as the key to its next stage of successful development.

- While assessment and the marking of pupils' work are regular, there is inconsistency in practice between classes and subjects. The basic system for the use of assessment to support learning is well thought out and is used to plan lessons that meet the needs of the range of pupils' ages and abilities. However, not all pupils are given enough chances to evaluate their own work against the targets for learning, whether in writing or in discussion. The marking of work is not consistent in the way it is used to show pupils' progress and what has to be learned next for improvement.
- The layout of the buildings and the current building works mean there are difficulties in ensuring children in Reception can work and play outside when they choose. Some good learning takes place outside, but for safety reasons it has to be organised carefully by staff. Indoors, the two Reception classes are in very differently sized rooms, which can mean some activities are cramped. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has planned a number of approaches to overcome these limitations, although they have yet to be completed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils have ample and consistent opportunities to self-evaluate their own work, especially in English and mathematics, by:
 - making sure the skills and knowledge to be learned in lessons are shared clearly with the pupils
 - giving pupils time in lessons to talk to their partners about how well they have progressed and what they still need to learn
 - sharing this with their teachers
 - identifying what has been learned and what must come next when marking pupils' books
 - encouraging pupils to respond regularly in writing to teachers' comments in their books
- Improve the effectiveness of use of all areas in the Early Years Foundation Stage, whether inside or out, by:
 - making sure children have consistent opportunities to choose for

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- themselves when they are to work or play outside
- providing ample opportunities indoors for children in both Reception classes to work and play together

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment in the Years 2 and 6 national assessments has risen well since the previous inspection. English results in particular stand out as consistently above average. This is due to the good focus on writing in literacy lessons. As children start school with low levels of literacy, staff in Reception have introduced a new approach to phonics which is improving the children's early reading and writing skills well. Pupils in the Years 1 and 2 classes now have stronger literacy skills to build from and the school's partnership with other primary schools has been used effectively to improve the way writing is taught. Pupils' books show some well-written pieces where spelling and punctuation are as carefully considered as the content. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 read, write and speak with confidence and have good use of vocabulary.

In mathematics, the partnership with other schools has again brought benefits in improving pupils' progress. Mathematics lessons are brisk and encourage pupils' speediness of calculation and knowledge of tables and number bonds. More intricate mathematics is taught well and the pupils have fun investigating and solving problems, as seen in a Year 3/4 lesson where the pupils used the 'Window of Hope' method to set out complex multiplication problems in the form of a table where the hundreds, tens and units were multiplied in turn with accurate results.

Good progress is made in lessons because of the enjoyment that is immediately apparent. Pupils rise well to the numerous challenges in lessons and work constructively together. Despite a very few exceptions, parents say that behaviour is good and their children agree. The school is a calm and quiet place of work and play, with well judged moments of excitement and high enthusiasm. Assemblies are used to set ambitious targets and to celebrate pupils' achievement. The pupils are really pleased when one of them is given an award for good results or achievement. They strive well to show the same qualities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	2

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' attainment ¹ 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
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	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching quality has improved and is now good in all parts of the school. Occasionally there is some satisfactory teaching which may include an inconsistent pace to learning, too much teacher talk and too few opportunities for pupils to discuss and write about their own progress. However, most lessons are of good quality because teachers provide work that is carefully matched to individual needs, questioning techniques are effective in helping pupils build good skills and the support given by teaching assistants contributes to pupils' good progress, especially for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Such good teaching was observed in a Year 5/6 mathematics lesson where the pupils eagerly used 'I can...' sentences to show the different ways they could calculate a division problem. They left the lesson wanting to improve their skills and knowledge next time.

The curriculum shows a good balance of relevant and interesting themes that are well planned to motivate pupils and build progress. Information and communication technology is a strength and is the basis for much of the cross-curricular work that enhances lessons. A Year 3/4 class was observed writing and talking enthusiastically of life in Roman Britannia. In their letters home the pupils, as Roman soldiers, complained of 'rain that fell like bullets'. This lesson did much to build their knowledge of history and develop their skills of writing. School leaders are keen to extend such links between subjects.

Reception children also benefit from the good improvement to their curriculum, which now enables them to build skills and knowledge much more systematically than in the past. They, like pupils elsewhere in school, benefit from the good care and guidance given. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are nurtured effectively and are helped to become as successful in their work as the other pupils.

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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 sets good expectations for staff and pupils. They respond positively and all share the same ambition to succeed and drive to overcome weakness. Leaders at all levels and the governors have a 'joined-up' approach to their work, which means that ways to monitor and evaluate the school's work are shared equally amongst them. It also leads to a rigorous and thorough approach that produces an accurate view of school performance. Whilst the data on pupils' progress are complex, they are easily evaluated to show those who may be falling behind or those who are doing particularly well. Leaders and governors continually ask questions about such information to make sure every pupil has similar opportunities to achieve well. They use the outcomes of improvement to measure the school's effectiveness and to renew targets and priorities.

Governors have the skills and knowledge to take a full part in the evaluation of the school's work. They share the ambitions and aspirations of staff. At present, due to the constantly leaking roofs and remedial building works, it is not easy to show in displays about the school that they have good ambition for high standards and best progress for every pupil. Governors accept that this can be improved when the builders leave. Together with school leaders, the governors review and update policies and practice regarding the safeguarding of pupils and promotion of community cohesion. The school is vigilant in pursuing pupils' best interests. The broadening of pupils' understanding of the diverse nature of society in Britain today is another priority which leaders know will underpin the good work done to promote partnerships with the local and international communities.

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

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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

The two Reception classes are different places from those at the last inspection. There is a vibrancy to children's work that shows in all six areas of learning. The development of skills is now much more systematic and, in the teaching of phonics particularly, the Early Years Foundation Stage has taken great steps forward. It is still difficult to enable children to choose spontaneously to work or play outside and the mix of one very large room and one very small one means that some activities are cramped, especially for the children based in the smaller area. Staff work well to overcome these limitations. Children were seen to mix colours for their pink pigs with great enthusiasm, lots of laughter and much discussion about different amounts of red and white to use. One child painted a custard coloured pig to match his brother's hair colour. He explained carefully why it was not pink.

The welfare of reception children is at the heart of what staff do. Regular records are kept of children's progress so that the next round of work can be matched to their individual needs. This contributes strongly to children's good progress. The children who attend the after-school club benefit because the work to develop their skills and knowledge is continued well at that time. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and the leader has well-advanced plans to make similar improvements to children's mathematical development as have already been made to their literacy and language.

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

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Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers hold very strong and positive views of the school. Of the 13 aspects included in their questionnaire, 11 showed nearly total agreement that the school does well. A very small number of parents and carers showed concerns about behaviour and its management. Inspectors judge that behaviour is good in lessons and about the school. While it is clear there are times when a few pupils are not best behaved, it is also the case that these instances are dealt with well, as is the extremely small amount of bullying.

One or two parents and carers had reservations about how well the school is led. Inspectors found that the school is well led and managed at all levels and that improvement is a way of life at St Mary's. They also agree with parents that their children enjoy school, that they are kept safe and that teaching is good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's C of E 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 92 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 334 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	55	60	34	37	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	61	35	38	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	37	40	47	51	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	41	43	47	5	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	40	44	45	49	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	35	48	52	5	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	46	40	44	4	4	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)	34	37	45	49	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	39	44	48	4	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	29	44	48	5	5	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	34	44	48	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	36	44	48	5	5	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	48	42	46	3	3	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%. The percentages have been rounded.

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.



19 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's C of E Primary School, Bideford, EX39 2QN

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited school recently. You shared your thoughts and ideas about the school with us, which helped us decide what your school is like. We think you go to a good school and that it has a number of key strengths.

- You reach above average standards and make good progress.
- You work hard, behave well and enjoy your learning.
- Children in the two Reception classes do well in school because their work is fun.
- You are taught well.
- The staff look after you carefully.
- You learn lots of new things in lessons and many of you have reached very good standards in swimming and sports.
- Your headteacher, the staff and the governors all want you to do the best you can and they work successfully to make improvements.

In our report we have listed two things that your teachers should work on to improve.

- You could have more opportunities to talk and write about your targets and how well you are reaching them.
- Children in the two Reception classes could learn together more often and have even more chances to choose when to work outside.

We know you will help your teachers make these improvements. As a start you can talk to them about the things you can improve in your work.

We wish you good luck for your future education.

Yours faithfully

David Carrington
Lead Inspector

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