

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101323
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	376548
Inspection dates	15–16 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Liz Duffy

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	480
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Wildish
Headteacher	Rob Allen
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 19 lessons taught by 14 teachers. Meetings were held with the staff, members of the governing body and pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of data and documentation, including the school improvement plan, school policies, assessment data and minutes of governing body meetings. The responses to questionnaires completed by staff, pupils and 236 parents and carers were also analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The current levels of attainment and rates of progress of all pupils, in particular in writing.
- The extent to which leaders and managers at different levels are driving and securing improvement.
- How far the governing body holds leaders to account for the school's performance.

Information about the school

St Mary's Church of England Primary School is a large, oversubscribed two-form entry primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average. The school is ethnically diverse; pupils of White British heritage form the largest ethnic group. A third of the pupil population speak English as an additional language though very few are at the earliest stages of acquisition. The Early Years Foundation Stage caters for children in Nursery and Reception Years.

The school is a multi-faith community with a strong Christian ethos. It coordinates a range of activities for the school community and the local community. The school has several awards reflecting its commitment promoting pupils' healthy lifestyles, provision for the arts and its work with protecting the environment.

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?**1****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

St Mary's vision statement: 'To nurture and develop self-esteem and confidence thus enabling all children to reach their potential' is excellently achieved at all levels. This outstanding school is truly holistic in its approach to looking after the needs of the whole child, the family and the local community. Parents know this and are overwhelmingly positive in their view of the school. One comment typified many: 'We could not ask for a better primary school.' Pupils are highly considerate and very supportive of one another and this is due to their very strong moral, social and cultural development. Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and the atmosphere in the school is calm and friendly. Pupils' spiritual development is excellent.

The school's exemplary care, guidance and support, along with excellent relationships with parents, carers and local partnerships, help secure pupils' high attainment by the end of Year 6. Safeguarding practice is good and pupils say they feel safe at all times. Results are well above the national average. Improvements in performance have been sustained over the past three years and results continue to rise. Progress is outstanding in Years 1 to 6. All groups of pupils are encouraged to fulfil their potential and this is equally true of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Good progress is made by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The development of early writing in the Nursery is particularly strong.

Teaching is securely good with a minority of lessons that are outstanding. Lessons are planned carefully to take account of pupils' different needs and abilities. Pupils benefit from a range of strategies to challenge them further, such as open research tasks, extension challenges and demanding questions posed by the teacher. The excellent curriculum and rich variety of extra-curricular activities enable pupils to achieve in many different ways and to enjoy their time at school. High numbers take part in the wide range of sporting and music opportunities. Particularly successful is the way in which the school promotes safe journeys to school and healthy lifestyles, as demonstrated by the various awards the school has achieved.

Strong assessment systems provide teachers with a wealth of information from which weaknesses are identified and tackled. Senior leaders have accurately identified that increasing the impact of middle leaders by involving them more in using and discussing data about pupil performance is an area for development, growing their capacity and confidence to take independent decisions as a result. Members of the governing body make an exceptional contribution to the work and direction of the school and have robust systems to hold the school to account. The school's success

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with raising pupils' attainment, improving governance and its accurate self-evaluation of its effectiveness, show that it is well placed to secure further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the impact of middle leaders by:
 - further increasing their ability to take independent decisions
 - ensuring regular discussion of the analysis of the online tracking system between middle leaders and class teachers
 - developing knowledge in subject areas where middle leaders are less confident.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils demonstrate high levels of enjoyment and make outstanding progress to leave with high attainment at the end of Year 6. All groups of pupils make significantly quicker progress than typically expected, including overall in writing. The high quality work completed in their time at the school is impressive. For example, a Year 4 girl wrote in a literacy lesson, 'India is a lotus flower in the heart of the Ganges.' A Year 4 boy during a data handling lesson argued articulately for a return from satellite navigation systems to street maps. Improvements in progress in writing in Year 2 are consolidating and building on pupils' excellent work in Year 1. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to perform much better than their peers nationally and make at least as much progress as their peers in school.

The pupils confirm that they consistently feel safe in and around the school and are entirely confident that the very few incidents of bullying or racial harassment are very effectively dealt with. This is due to the excellent understanding pupils have of their behaviour and how it affects others in the school community. They show high consideration for others; for example, helping to explain tasks to one another, looking after younger pupils in the playground and celebrating Christian values through giving nominations for pupils to receive the Good Values Awards. The latter is just one significant strength of pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are proud of their heritage and celebrate readily other cultures. For example, one Year 6 pupil had created a display of her Ghanaian heritage incorporating traditional clothes and photographs of her family. Pupils' contribution to the school and the wider community is excellent. Large numbers of pupils have taken part in fund-raising activities, safe journey campaigns and environmental working groups.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of what it means to be healthy and benefit from a range of initiatives such as the fruit scheme and the sports partnership. Pupils are well prepared for future life as demonstrated by the excellent learning outcomes and pupil questionnaires where a very large majority agree that they are prepared for their next steps. Pupils enjoy running the 'Natwest' bank on site. There are very few cases of persistent absenteeism and overall attendance is above average.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The progress of pupils in Years 1 to 6 is outstanding due to the excellent support for learning, exceptional care, guidance and support for welfare, an extremely strong curriculum and good teaching. Teaching is good and a minority of lessons are outstanding, though this proportion is increasing. This matches the school's own self-evaluation and mirrors the statistics of the school's monitoring of lessons. Sometimes teachers' verbal questioning during the start of the lesson is not well targeted according to ability.

Teachers establish and maintain positive relationships with pupils, creating a learning environment which is highly nurturing and celebratory. A wide variety of activities makes learning fun and pupils enthusiastically tackle problems. Paired talk is used effectively to help pupils clarify ideas and to extend learning. More-able pupils benefit from additional challenging tasks. The interactive whiteboards are used well to engage pupils. However, less strong is teachers' use of the classroom laptops to enhance learning. The support from learning assistants is particularly impressive. They are adept at breaking down information for younger learners and skilfully steer pupils so that they find out answers for themselves, thus creating excitement in the discovery of learning. Assessment is consistently outstanding throughout the school. Pupils regularly reflect on their learning and will mark in their books whether they feel confident with a particular skill. Frequently, they set their own success criteria and help to assess peers' work. They know their next steps for improvement and

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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monitor their own progress towards their goals. Marking is excellent with very helpful comments and questions to deepen understanding.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding, for example, the special educational needs and/or disabilities team works tirelessly with other adults in the school to meet the varied needs of pupils and their families. The school is proactive in securing external support where necessary to ensure that it gives the best possible chances to pupils.

The thematic curriculum provides a rich and creative learning experience for pupils. They benefit from learning French and Chinese and have the opportunity to undertake tennis coaching during curriculum time. This is complemented by a vast extra-curricular programme with over 40 clubs being offered. Particularly impressive is the 75-pupil-strong choir who sing with gusto during school assemblies.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's vision for all to attain their potential is shared by all teachers. They have a passion for their school to succeed and are proud of the outcomes that have been achieved. Morale is high as is the support for one another; they value the fact that they can talk to the leaders in the school and feel their views are heard and acted upon. One member of staff commented, 'Working with the headteacher is an absolute privilege. He is a fantastic role model for me.' Inspectors agree with a parent who commented that the headteacher was 'exceptional' and he is ably supported by his deputy headteacher. Middle leaders are growing in confidence with holding class teachers to account in their areas and have been successful with implementing a new feedback policy. A few subject leaders are less confident in developing their subject areas due to insecure subject knowledge.

Safeguarding procedures are well developed so pupils are effectively protected, safe and secure in school. Scrutiny of health and safety is rigorous at all levels and the governing body monitors safeguarding arrangements closely. The governing body is hard working, an asset to the school and makes an exceptional contribution. It is actively involved in providing opportunities and improving learning for pupils. For example, a governor helped to create the assessment tracking sheets that are used by the school. The governing body sets challenging targets and monitors the work of the school closely, providing high levels of professional challenge to leaders, with the

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result being strong outcomes and a clear understanding of any barriers to learning. This means that the governing body is extremely well placed to help the school overcome issues and thus secure future development.

Equality of opportunity is outstanding as demonstrated by all pupils achieving highly. The school rigorously challenges any potential discrimination at all levels and racist incidents are extremely rare and robustly dealt with. The inclusive ethos is at the heart of the school. All three areas of community cohesion are strong: the school has comprehensive plans in place which address faith, ethnicity and culture and strong links with not just the local community but also the wider global community. For example, pupils enjoy taking part in the Shoebox Appeal, which helps the needy in Moldova, and through their discussions pupils demonstrate a strong understanding of the world around them.

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	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because of the good range of learning experiences that teachers provide for them. Adults support learning well. This is particularly evident in the quality of interaction and the focused approach to developing language. In the Nursery there are plenty of opportunities to develop early writing. This is less secure in Reception where there are limited signs and opportunities for writing outdoors. Parents are well informed through displays of planning and frequent communication. One parent commented, ‘The Nursery staff provide a very caring, supportive and nurturing atmosphere.’ Children are happy and confident. They are comfortable talking to adults and are polite and courteous to each other. The environment is safe and children are supervised at all times. Assessments are regular and help inform planning but members of staff do not use

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the assessment information sufficiently to closely monitor groups of children.

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 and carers are enthusiastic about the education and experiences the pupils at St Mary’s receive. An overwhelming majority believe their child enjoys school and is making good progress. All parents and carers believe their child is kept safe. Comments written on the questionnaires indicate they appreciate the help and support provided by the various means of communication; for example, through the newsletter and through regular contact with classroom representatives. A very small minority disagreed and do not feel supported with helping their children to learn. Most parents and carers are of the opinion that the school take account of their suggestions and concerns. There are plenty of opportunities for parents to be involved in the life of the school and many contribute to the extensive extra-curricular provision.

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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 236 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 480 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	154	65	78	33	4	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	150	64	84	36	1	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	98	42	112	47	22	9	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	91	39	114	48	26	11	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	96	41	119	50	11	5	2	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	93	39	108	46	29	12	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	129	55	100	42	4	2	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)	106	45	95	40	14	6	1	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	93	39	109	46	25	11	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	88	37	120	51	17	7	1	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	85	36	107	45	17	7	7	3
The school is led and managed effectively	113	48	99	42	11	5	5	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	129	55	88	37	14	6	1	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 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.

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.



18 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's C of E Primary School, Finchley, N3 1BT

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to visit your school. In particular, I would like to thank those pupils who gave up their lunchtime to speak with us. I would also like to thank those of you who completed the pupil questionnaire. You told us that you enjoy school and that you feel safe. I am delighted to tell you that you are attending an outstanding school. There are a number of aspects that are excellent.

- Your behaviour and the way in which you look after each other.
- Your enjoyment of your lessons; you all work hard and try to perform to the best of your ability.
- Your progress, so you attain high levels by the time you leave.
- The personal skills and qualities you develop.
- The numerous opportunities the school gives you to try new things.
- The curriculum and the care adults give you.

Children in Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well because provision for them is good. There is one important thing that we have asked your headteacher, teachers and governing body to do in order to improve your school further.

- Make sure all leaders can help your school continue to get better by identifying quickly when you become stuck in your learning.

Remember you can help by telling your teacher when you do not understand the work. I am sure you will continue to help your school be the best it can be.

Yours sincerely

Liz Duffy
Lead inspector

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