

St Mary's Primary School, Dilwyn

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Mark Mumby HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

St Mary's Primary School, Dilwyn provides education for boys and girls aged from four to eleven years. There is currently one Reception Year child in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school opened in September 2011, following the closure of the maintained village primary school. The school is situated in Dilwyn, a small village to the west of Leominster. The school has been set up by the village community to provide free education; all of the staff are volunteers. It is registered for 56 pupils and there are currently 16 pupils on roll. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. This is the school's first inspection by Ofsted.

The school's vision is: 'to guide and nurture each individual towards his/her best achievable level of attainment, in all aspects of learning and personal development: academic, physical and spiritual by offering an exciting and inspirational curriculum in a caring, family-style environment guided by the ethos of the Christian faith.'

Evaluation of the school

St Mary's Primary School, Dilwyn provides a good quality of education. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the caring family ethos of the school, working and playing together extremely well. Their behaviour is outstanding. Procedures for the safeguarding of pupils are robust and the school meets all of the regulations for registration as an independent school.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. Schemes of work are comprehensive and cover the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum. Work is planned around a topic-based rolling programme which meets the needs of the mixed-age classes well. Planning includes good opportunities for development of skills across the curriculum. For example, pupils develop their information and communication (ICT) skills as they prepare presentations as part of their geography work and practise their writing and data handling skills in science.

The school makes good use of the local environment including farms, woods, streams and historic buildings to add enjoyment to learning. For example, all pupils

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

attend forest school each week. This helps to develop an understanding of the natural environment, raise self-esteem and confidence, and improve social skills. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the wide range of experiences and the skills and knowledge they gain through these activities.

The personal, social and health education programme is suitably planned to enable pupils to develop a good understanding about themselves. It includes topics to promote personal safety and drug awareness as well as informing pupils about the changes that they face as they grow up. A visit from a paramedic helped to raise awareness of first aid and safety. The curriculum is enriched with a range of visits to places of interest such as a local castle or Roman ruins. These visits are carefully planned to complement the work carried out in the classroom. A visitor from Kenya helped to develop pupils' understanding about life in a Kenyan school as pupils learnt songs and games from that country. A good range of extra-curricular activities and competitive sports, including hand-bells, a girls' football team and orienteering all add to the good range of opportunities available to the pupils. The broad curriculum ensures that pupils are prepared well for the responsibilities, opportunities and experiences ahead of them.

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is mostly good, but is limited by the very small number of children in Reception. The school has developed an effective partnership arrangement with the neighbouring playgroup to help to address this but opportunities for Reception children to have free choice of activities indoors and outdoors throughout each day is not possible.

Teaching and assessment are good enabling pupils to make good progress. Teachers, many of whom are specialists in their subject areas, use their very good subject knowledge to plan challenging work which engages the interests of the pupils very well. As a result of the good use of assessment, teachers know the pupils well and plan activities which are mostly well-matched to their abilities. Lessons are typically well structured with smooth transitions between activities leading to a good pace of learning; this is particularly the case in Key Stage 1. A good range of resources, for example in science and ICT, are used well to ensure that teaching is effective. In most lessons, teachers use questioning well to assess understanding and extend pupils' learning. Teaching is not outstanding because teachers occasionally miss opportunities to challenge pupils fully and extend learning through the use of open questioning which gets to the root of pupils' understanding. As a result, tasks are not always adapted appropriately as a lesson progresses to suit the emerging needs of the individual pupils. Occasionally pupils spend too long listening to the teacher rather than engaging in independent work.

Marking is thorough throughout the school. However, it is most effective in Key Stage 1 because it clearly identifies achievement and the next steps the pupils need to take. In Key Stage 2, developmental marking is good in English but less effective in mathematics.

The school has implemented a structured system to assess pupils' attainment and progress based on the Early Years Foundation Stage profile and National Curriculum levels. It makes appropriate use of a commercial assessment system to monitor achievement and compare pupils' performance with national expectations. The learning journey records for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are comprehensive and provide clear evidence of the children's progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their behaviour is outstanding. They have excellent attitudes in lessons and cooperate extremely well when working in groups. They are keen to support one another to succeed in tasks. Pupils are very courteous and speak confidently to each other and to adults. They are proud of their school and pupils of all ages play very happily together at break times. There is no evidence of unacceptable behaviour and pupils say that there is no bullying. The pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in very high levels of attendance.

Pupils readily take on responsibilities in school such as setting out tables for lunch or taking care when turning the goose eggs in the incubator. They experience democracy as they elect house captains who are representative of the range of ages and abilities in the school, valuing all of the individuals and showing an excellent attitude to equality.

Pupils were reflective in assemblies as they contemplated the life of St George and considered the theme of gratitude. The school actively promotes an understanding of different cultures through the curriculum such as studying different faiths in religious education. However, pupils' understanding of a range of different cultures is only satisfactory; they lack first-hand experience of different cultural traditions.

The school plays an important role in village life. The pupils are enthusiastic to participate in community events, such as the dance festival which was taking place during the week of the inspection. They presented a nativity in the church for the local community. Almost every pupil will participate in Morris dancing and maypole dancing for the village show, which they are currently preparing for.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Health and safety are underpinned by a range of inter-linked policies which are very clearly written and outline appropriate procedures for staff to follow to minimise risks to pupils. The school has prepared detailed risk assessments for activities on and away from the school site. Staff are appropriately trained in child protection and first aid. First aid procedures and the recording of accidents are comprehensive.

Policies to manage behaviour and prevent bullying are implemented effectively. The behaviour policy is based on pupils' rights and responsibilities. Pupils feel very safe in

school and they show a good awareness of safety. For example, they explain how to use equipment safely in science lessons and are aware of the risks when using the internet. They say there is no bullying. Pupils are very well supervised at all times.

The school has sought professional advice about fire safety and a fire risk assessment has been completed. It has followed up the recommended actions and carries out appropriate routine checks for fire safety. The school responded immediately to minor record-keeping shortcomings noted during the inspection.

All pupils participate in regular physical activities including yoga and have a good understanding about leading healthy lifestyles. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school carries out all of the required checks on staff and others prior to their appointment and maintains a single central register in line with requirements.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is housed in a former maintained primary school. The premises provide suitable accommodation for the school. The buildings have been refurbished to a high specification and are maintained in good order. There are sufficient outdoor grassed and hard-play areas suitable for sport and recreation.

Provision of information

The school provides all of the required information for parents, carers and others through its website and supporting documentation. As the school has not been open for a complete year, it has not prepared reports for parents and carers about their children's attainment and progress. However, it has planned to prepare and issue reports before the end of the current term.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a clearly written complaints procedure which fulfils the regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Raise expectations and make more effective use of assessment during lessons to extend learning through challenging questioning and activities in order to enable all pupils to make the best possible progress.
- Improve the opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to learn independently in the outdoor environment.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of a wide range of cultures and beliefs through first-hand experience.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Primary		
Date school opened	6 September 2011		
Age range of pupils	4–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls: 13	Total: 16
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	Nil		
Address of school	Dilwyn Herefordshire HR4 8HR		
Telephone number	01544 318277		
Email address	head@stmarysprimarydilwyn.co.uk		
Headteacher	John Gerrish		
Proprietor	Brigadier John Spackman		

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.



27 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Primary School, Dilwyn, Herefordshire HR4 8HR

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school this week. I enjoyed visiting your lessons, talking with you and looking at your work.

Your school provides you with a good quality of education. You are given many good opportunities to learn in lessons as well as away from the school site such as at forest school. One of the particularly good things is that you have a lot of different teachers who are able to share their very good knowledge of their own subjects with you. Although you make good progress for most of the time, I have suggested that you could make even better progress if your teachers challenged you even more at times. You go on some interesting visits, but I have suggested that the school might try to find more ways for you to meet people from different cultures or religions.

You have lots of space in school and some lovely outdoor areas. I really enjoyed seeing you all playing so well together outside. That was an example of your excellent behaviour and consideration for others which I also saw in lessons. It is a good idea for the school to work with the playgroup next door but I have suggested that the school tries to find even more ways for the youngest children to be able to choose to learn outside more often.

Please continue to work hard and keep up your excellent attendance. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby
Her Majesty's Inspector