

St Mary of Charity CofE (Aided) Primary School

Orchard Place, Faversham, Kent, ME13 8AP

Inspection dates 11–12 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and has not been good enough to eradicate previous underachievement.
- Activities are not sufficiently well matched to pupils' next steps in learning in some lessons.
- Attainment has been low in reading, writing and mathematics for a number of years before 2012 when the school met government floor standards.
- A minority of pupils does not make sufficient progress in mathematics and writing.
- Recent improvements in teaching introduced by the headteacher have not had sufficient time to increase achievement over a sustained period.

The school has the following strengths

- As a result of actions taken by leaders and the governing body, the quality of teaching, attendance and pupils' rates of progress are all improving. This is effectively addressing the issues of low attainment and previous underachievement.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and well managed which results in good progress across all areas of learning.
- The school has a highly positive, calm atmosphere with well-developed links to the local community.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Respectful and supportive relationships throughout the school enable pupils to develop good levels of self-esteem and confidence. Attendance is above average.
- The school has a proven track record of helping disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to make the best of their education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons involving eight teachers.
- They held discussions with staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, and met with parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and reviewed documentation, including improvement plans, the systems for tracking pupils' progress, the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and samples of pupils' work.
- They took account of the four responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and the views of parents and carers spoken to during the inspection.

Inspection team

Michael Bartleman, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Janice Williams

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary of Charity CE (Aided) Primary School is a slightly smaller than average primary school. The majority of pupils come from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action and those at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- A before-school club, The Oasis, runs daily.
- The school's inclusion provision, The Ark, gives additional support to pupils from the school and from other schools within the immediate locality.
- The school has recently restructured its senior leadership framework.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013, in order to accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment, strengthen the overall quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by:
 - sharing more widely the good practice that exists within the school
 - develop an even sharper focus to the matching of activities to pupils' next steps in learning so their learning accelerates further, particularly in Year 3 and Year 4
 - ensuring that the marking policy is consistently applied so all pupils understand how to improve, and have time to respond to teachers' comments
 - addressing inconsistencies, especially those linked to the use of assessment and the pace of lessons.
- By July 2013, ensure that at least 85% of pupils throughout the school are making expected, or better than expected, progress in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that pupils have the basic skills and knowledge to support their mental and written calculations
 - providing additional opportunities to use mathematics and problem solving in other areas of the curriculum
 - ensuring pupils are fully involved in all aspects of the lesson.
- Enable the vast majority of pupils to reach at least average attainment in English consistently over time by:
 - ensuring boys make similar year-on-year progress to girls in reading and writing, especially in Year 3 and Year 4
 - providing more opportunities to write at length in other curriculum areas.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- When they start at the school, children's skills and understanding are below levels expected for their age. Due to the well-managed provision the children make good progress across all areas of learning, and quickly grow in confidence.
- There has been a wide variation in rates of progress of all pupils in recent years in English and mathematics which has resulted in low attainment by Year 6.
- Pupils' progress is now increasing, particularly in Year 6 where accelerated progress last year enabled attainment to be at expected levels. However, there are still pockets of underachievement particularly in Year 3 and Year 4.
- Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is accelerating due to improved teaching, increased pace of learning and focus on basic skills. This improvement, evident in the lessons observed, was confirmed by the school's data and scrutiny of pupils' work. However, at present, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their mental or written calculation skills or to apply them, such as through solving problems or to write at length in other curriculum areas.
- Progress and attainment in reading are stronger than in writing and mathematics. Pupils of all ages are supported to learn a range of strategies that help them to read with confidence. They make good use of their knowledge of the sounds letters make (phonics) to read unfamiliar text and enjoy reading a wide variety of books.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make better progress than other pupils. The well-planned support they receive, particularly from teaching assistants, enables them to work confidently in lessons and to achieve well.
- In some lessons pupils are making good or better progress. However, this has not been the case in previous years and remaining inconsistencies mean achievement requires improvement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's monitoring data show an increasing number lessons are good. Positive relationships between teachers and pupils are a marked feature and produce confident and resilient learners.
- The school's focus on improving teaching and learning is having a positive impact on the pace of learning and the use of regular assessment to inform lesson planning. For example, in response to the teacher's evaluation of their work from the previous day, pupils in Year 6 were helped to improve their confidence in dividing by 10, 100 and 1000 within the context of their Victorian topic. Through interactive and highly effective modelling the teacher ensured that the pupils were able to complete the well matched and challenging tasks successful.
- Although this effective practice was evident in a number of good lessons seen, it is not firmly embedded across the school because good practice is not always shared widely. In some lessons where teaching is less than good, activities are not closely enough matched to pupils' next steps in learning, pupils are not fully engaged in all parts of the lesson and there is insufficient challenge.
- Marking is timely and encouraging but does not always follow the school policy consistently and provide guidance that is precise enough to help pupils improve their work. Scrutiny of work shows that often pupils do not have sufficient time to act on classteachers' advice. Marking and use of improvement targets are stronger in English than in other areas of the curriculum.
- Lessons are usually well structured and a good range of resources, including information and communication technology, are used effectively to motivate pupils. Frequently

questioning is used successfully to deepen understanding. Teaching assistants work in close partnership with teachers and make a good contribution to learning, particularly for those who need additional support.

- Teachers ensure pupils have many opportunities to work together and to appreciate each other's views. For example, Year 1 pupils eagerly shared their knowledge of estimation, and this gave them the confidence to make accurate estimations of their own, although the lack of independence limited their achievement.
- The teaching of reading is well organised and includes the successful teaching of the sounds letters make (phonics) by both teachers and teaching assistants. This effective practice is reflected in pupils' enthusiasm for reading and the standards pupils reach.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The vast majority of pupils behave well around the school and in their lessons. From the time they start in the Reception class they are helped to develop the social and learning skills that enable them to interact positively with each other and with adults. Pupils are polite, friendly and courteous.
- Their attendance is above average reflecting the effective support from the school's family liaison officer.
- Most parents and carers who responded to the on-line questionnaire or spoke to inspectors judged behaviour to be good, although a small minority expressed concerns about some pupils' inappropriate behaviour in lessons and bullying.
- Inspections findings, including observations and the scrutiny of school documentation, show that incidents of unacceptable behaviour are diminishing. The school has clear procedures that are implemented consistently for the effective management of pupils who find behaving well difficult. Pupils' respect for adults and each other, and their clear understanding of how they are expected to behave, are strong features of lessons that enable most to proceed without disruption.
- Parents and carers said their children are safe and well cared for. This view is reflected in the confidence expressed by pupils that they are safe at school, and that any bullying is dealt with effectively. They have total confidence in the headteacher and the staff in The Ark to solve any difficulties.
- The school's in-house inclusion provision, The Ark, is effective in supporting more vulnerable pupils both from the school and others within the locality with individual programmes of work. Pupils greatly appreciate the early morning club, The Oasis, which provides a calm start to the school day. Staff ensure there is no discrimination and are well focused on ensuring all pupils have the best opportunities to achieve.
- Through a well-planned curriculum pupils are helped to develop a range of strategies so they are able to manage everyday risks for themselves, such as those associated with the internet and roads.

The leadership and management are good

- The determination and strong leadership of the headteacher and her recently formed senior team have been instrumental in moving the school forward. The more corporate and effective use of data has led to proficient and accurate self-evaluation. Staff at all levels are ambitious for the school and work well together as a cohesive team.
- The school has continued to develop despite encountering staffing difficulties which leaders have managed sensitively. Issues highlighted in the previous inspection have been addressed. Increased focus on basic skills, higher expectations and greater accountability has put the school on a firm footing from which to secure further improvement.

- Performance management and professional development are used well to help staff realise the school's raised expectations of teaching and learning. Although inconsistencies remain, the improvements secured so far this year are reflected in pupils' faster progress and attainment data that are better than for the previous years.
 - The school has refined its system for tracking pupils' progress which is being used more effectively by staff to identify groups and individuals who need additional support to close quickly any gaps in their learning.
 - The school has close working relationships with a number of outside agencies to support pupils and their families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable.
 - The curriculum is well organised and covers all subjects appropriately. Pupils say they enjoy their topics and recalled with pleasure many of their recent activities, especially the Year 6 residential trip, the school performances, their involvement in local events and visits to museums to support their learning. There is good participation in the wide range of after-school clubs on offer.
 - The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. School assemblies foster a strong sense of community. The provision of opportunities to engage in sport, music and cultural events, such as French Week and links with a school in Serbia, help to broaden pupils' appreciation of British and global diversity. This is reflected in the good quality of relationships and the harmonious way in which pupils work and play together.
 - The local authority has provided good support through the Kent Challenge which has resulted in improvements last year. The school works effectively with a range of schools in the local area which provides additional opportunities for moderation of work, support for gifted and talented pupils and for professional development.
 - Transition both in and out of the school is well managed. Effective links are made with children starting school through good links with pre-school providers and home visits which ensure children's needs are met as soon as they start school.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - has been increasingly effective with good monitoring arrangements in place resulting in a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and in its ability to challenge school leaders robustly
 - has been increasingly effective in providing good financial management, ensuring that pupils are well supported
 - ensures robust safeguarding procedures are in place which fully meet requirements.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	133663
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	402578

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Church of England Aided School
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ray Colyer
Headteacher	Pauline Hann
Date of previous school inspection	30 June–1 July 2010
Telephone number	01795 532496
Fax number	01795 591052
Email address	headteacher@smc.kent.gov.uk

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