

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Ascupart Street, Southampton, SO14 1LU.

Inspection dates 17–18 October 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- There has been a marked improvement in pupils' progress since the last inspection. This is because teaching is getting better and better. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well.
- Children's progress is particularly fast in the Nursery because the teaching here is almost always outstanding. This gives the children an excellent start to their education.
- Performance management processes are rigorous and well organised. Senior staff have introduced excellent systems to improve teaching and learning. About a third of the teaching is now outstanding.
- There is constant checking of lessons and excellent support is given to improve the skills of all the staff.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and learning and they get on well together. They behave well, feel safe and relationships are excellent throughout the school.
- The leadership of the executive headteacher is superb. Her commitment, drive and determination, linked to outstanding skills in all aspects of headship, mean that the school's effectiveness has improved.
- The executive headteacher is supported well by senior staff and the governing body. Teamwork is strong, staff morale high and all are determined that the school should become outstanding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Even though an increasing number of lessons are outstanding and most of the rest are good, this results in pupils making good, rather than outstanding, progress overall.
- Levels of attendance are low.
- Although teachers are skilled at helping pupils to catch up and attain average standards, weaknesses in the basic skills of handwriting and calculation in mathematics hamper pupils from reaching higher standards.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with a half day's notice.
- Inspectors observed 30 lessons taught by 23 members of staff. Of these, six were joint observations undertaken with the executive headteacher, head of school and director of teaching and learning.
- Inspectors held meetings with a representative from the local authority, with members of the governing body and with groups of pupils. In addition to a number of meetings with members of staff, the questionnaires completed by 25 members of staff were taken into account.
- As well as informal discussions with parents and carers at the end of the school day, a meeting was held with them. Account could not be taken of the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) because there were no responses.
- The inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school's improvement plan, leaders' monitoring of teaching reports and pupils' work.

Inspection team

Keith Sadler, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mina Driver

Additional Inspector

Peter Thrussell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's is a much larger than average primary school. It is in a formal partnership with another Southampton school, Portswood Primary. There is an executive headteacher, a director of teaching and learning and an executive school business manager, all of whom have responsibilities across both schools. In addition, there is a head of school. There are separate governing bodies for each school though there is a joint liaison committee.
- The very large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion that speaks English as an additional language is very high, as is the number at an early stage of learning English. Currently, there are 36 home languages represented in the pupil population.
- Many pupils enter and leave the school at times other than the normal entry point. This is because the school serves an area that has a high number of families who frequently move home. Fewer than half the current Year 6 pupils have been in the school since Year 1, for example.
- The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high in comparison to the national average. These pupils are entitled to the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government).
- The number of pupils supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school meets the current floor standards set by the government, which determine the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' learning and make all teaching outstanding by ensuring that:
 - pupils' mental calculation skills are strengthened
 - presentation skills are improved so that pupils' writing is cursive and fluent
 - pupils' grammar skills are improved
 - pupils' skills, particularly those of enquiry and evaluation, are improved in order for pupils to be more independent in their learning.
- Improve pupils' attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average by:
 - ensuring that parents and carers understand the negative effect absence has on their children's progress due to non attendance
 - embedding the effective systems in place to boost attendance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities that are much below expected levels. Provision here is outstanding and hence children make rapid progress in all areas of learning. The many children that start school speaking very little English receive excellent support and they make particularly strong progress in their literacy and social skills.
- Progress has been improved because teaching and learning are much better than at the last inspection. This has resulted in standards being lifted to average levels at Year 2 and Year 6. Attainment in reading has improved particularly well. Inspection evidence from observations and reviewing pupils' work confirms that progress is strong. When taking account of their different starting points, the proportion making and exceeding the expected progress is above national figures.
- All groups of pupils, including those entitled to extra funding, and those who join the school part way through their primary school years, achieve well. This is because the school is very careful to ensure that the needs of all groups are met. This is particularly the case for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Staff ensure that their particular needs are identified accurately and swiftly. Good-quality individual programmes are then developed to meet each pupil's needs. In consequence, the gaps between these pupils' performance and those nationally are closing.
- Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English make excellent progress in their speaking and listening skills because their progress is carefully tracked so that the right amount of support is provided to meet their needs. Achievement in reading is excellent. Pupils are taught letters and sounds well in the lower year groups and this benefits the pupils' literacy skills. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils' attainment is above average and pupils read fluently and well.
- In English, progress between Years 2 and 6 is much faster than expected. Even so, overall outcomes are held back because pupils' presentation skills are weak and this limits the quantity of writing that they produce. Furthermore, in writing, pupils' grammar skills are not sufficiently well developed.
- In mathematics, pupils enjoy the good range of activities that are provided and they make good progress. Pupils particularly relish the many opportunities that teachers plan for them to carry out practical problems. However, weak mental and oral calculation skills prevent many pupils from finding results quickly.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching observed by inspectors was consistently good across many subjects, and in a minority of lessons it was outstanding. In most lessons, work is demanding and challenging. As one Year 6 pupil commented, 'Our teachers work really hard to make us better and lift our levels.' Pupils are particularly appreciative of the daily opportunities provided for them to have 'workshops'. These are sessions held to support any pupils who say that they do not fully understand what they need to do to be successful learners in lessons.
- The key to the improving teaching is the close monitoring of lessons. Under the expert guidance of the director of teaching and learning, a team of coaches checks lessons, pupils' work and teachers' plans. These senior and middle leaders work alongside all the teaching staff and their expertise in coaching and developing teaching is reaping rich rewards.
- Pupils know what is expected of them. This is because they are told what they will be learning and how they can be successful, and these are carefully checked towards the end of lessons. Marking is very good. It is thorough and good guidance is provided for next steps in learning. The school's determination to ensure that pupils become more independent in their learning is starting to pay dividends. Even so, in some lessons, pupils' learning skills, particularly those of

enquiry and evaluation are not sufficiently well developed to enable them to be independent.

- Teaching assistants make a very strong contribution to learning throughout the school. This is not only for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, but also for more able pupils who are supported in the classroom.
- A few lessons where teaching requires improvement remain. Here, the pace of learning dips because teachers do not spot pupils' learning needs quickly enough. Even though an increasing number of lessons are excellent, teaching overall is not yet outstanding because the lessons that require improvement result in good rather than outstanding learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. It shows that the school's strong commitment to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective in enabling pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds and heritages to get on well with each other.
- Pupils speak with pride about their school, and parents and carers who spoke with inspectors said that the school is a happy place. They emphasised how safe their children are in school and that they enjoy school. Staff make sure that all pupils are given the opportunity to be included in all the school has to offer. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Inspectors spoke to a group of pupils who entered the school within the last few years speaking no English, and this group were effusive about the support that they had to settle into school. They said that they appreciated the special arrangements for them to have buddies and also English language lessons.
- Pupils told inspectors that the good levels of behaviour seen during the inspection were typical. They reported that they feel safe in school and that there is hardly any name calling or bullying and that any minor incidents are quickly resolved by the adults.
- Because the personal and social education programme is of good quality, pupils are helped to understand the impact of different forms of bullying and they are particularly knowledgeable about the importance of e-safety.
- Senior staff have struggled to lift levels of attendance. Following review, an excellent range of methods to improve attendance is now in place. Recent developments, which include very close checking of absences and greater involvement with outside agencies and also incentives for pupils, show the school's commitment to raising levels of attendance. However, some families continue to disregard the school's efforts.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher is much admired within the whole school community for bringing about the many improvements since the previous inspection. Her leadership and management skills are exemplary and, when combined with her commitment and high energy levels, this means that the school is expertly led. She is supported exceptionally well by the senior and middle managers.
- By focusing on high expectations and not accepting weak practice, particularly through the rigorous performance management procedures, teaching has improved. Furthermore, increases in teachers' salaries are strongly linked to pupils' achievements. As one teacher said, 'At other schools I have been told what my weaknesses are, but here they are dealt with and I am supported brilliantly. This has resulted in my being a much better teacher.'
- The way the school checks up on its performance is very good. This information is used well and shows the main areas for development which are linked to the high-quality school improvement plan. The plan is checked up on well and there is strong evidence of the school successfully meeting its own targets. The school's checks on its work, linked to strengths in the care and

guidance for pupils, ensure equal opportunities for all pupils.

- The large amounts of additional funding that are provided for pupils that are entitled to pupil premium are used effectively. This funding is used directly to support one-to-one and group booster sessions for these pupils. In addition, additional in-class support is provided. In consequence, these pupils' progress and performance match that of their classmates.
 - The school's curriculum is of good quality. Pupils are motivated well by the interesting range of topics. These themes also help them to use and apply successfully their key skills of reading, writing and mathematics. For example, in an outstanding science lesson, the teacher's planning skilfully wove together learning objectives in science, mathematics and literacy.
 - Support from the local authority, commencing with the appointment of the executive headteacher and director of teaching and learning to the school, has been effective.
 - Even though there are many outstanding features in the school's leadership and management, as yet the overall impact on provision and pupils' progress is good rather than outstanding.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - is good. Members of the governing body have a good knowledge of the strengths of the school and areas for development
 - governors effectively challenge and support senior leaders and play an important role in school improvement
 - they ensure that statutory duties are met and that financial resources, including the pupil premium, are managed effectively
 - they are rigorous in ensuring that regulatory responsibilities for child protection and safeguarding are met in full.
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What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 116343 |
| Local authority | Southampton |
| Inspection number | 405642 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 463 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Jan Bradford, Steve Hall |
| Headteacher | Lyn Codling (Executive Headteacher) |
| Date of previous school inspection | 23–24 November 2010 |
| Telephone number | 02380 223930 |
| Fax number | 02380 224605 |
| Email address | info@st-marys.pri.southampton.sch.uk |

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