

St Mary's CofE (VC) Primary School

Queen Street, Kingswinford, DY6 7AQ

Inspection dates 9–10 October 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

- Too few pupils reach the highest levels in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Pupils in Years 4 and 5 make slower progress than pupils in other year groups and do not achieve as well.
- The quality of teaching varies too much. It is weaker in mathematics than in English.
- Teachers do not always use time, or the resources available, effectively.
- Pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work.
- The youngest children in the school sometimes spend too long sitting at the front of the class learning as a whole group. When this happens some children lose concentration and their learning slows.
- The school has had to rely frequently on temporary teachers and supply teachers to cover staff absence and there has been a loss of continuity in pupils' learning and progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Actions taken to raise standards in English are resulting in better achievement in reading and writing.
- Most pupils behave well and feel extremely safe.
- The curriculum has some outstanding features and ensures that pupils enjoy school.
- The school's leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. This is helping them secure improvement in teaching and pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons; five of these were joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors made visits to five other lessons and heard readers from the Year 1 and Year 2 classes.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils, senior members of staff, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers, took account of 14 completed online questionnaires (Parent View) and analysed 30 written comments from parents and carers.
- The inspectors looked at the pupils' English and mathematics books with a senior member of staff.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school's self-evaluation, minutes of meetings of the governing body and safeguarding records.

Inspection team

Anthony O'Malley, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Marilyn Mottram

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium (additional government funding) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs (those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs) is below average. The proportion supported by school action is also below the national average.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils are White British. Around 10% of pupils have a range of minority ethnic heritages.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection in March 2010, the school has experienced a high turnover of staff and high levels of staff absence.
- A pre-school on site is managed by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, particularly in Years 4 and 5, so that much more is good or better by:
 - providing activities that meet pupils' needs more precisely and so offer the right amount of challenge
 - making sure that activities are interesting and the teaching aids used are helpful
 - giving feedback to pupils in lessons and written comments in their books that help them understand how well they are doing and how they can improve
 - giving those teachers who require improvement opportunities to learn from the best teachers in the school and highly effective teachers in other schools.
- Raise standards in mathematics by:
 - challenging higher-ability pupils by giving them work which encourages them to think for themselves
 - making sure that key skills are taught in the correct order
 - improving pupils' knowledge and recall of multiplication tables, particularly in Year 5
 - improving the subject knowledge of teachers so that explanations are always clear and help pupils understand what is being taught.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because it is improving but not fast enough. In 2011, standards at the end of Year 6 were below average. Now standards in English and mathematics are broadly average, but in mathematics more-able pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
- More-able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in mathematics lessons. Too often they work at relatively straightforward tasks and so do not have to think for themselves how they can use their skills to solve tricky problems.
- In 2011 girls' achievement in mathematics by end of Year 6 was inadequate and much lower than that of boys. Improved test results in 2012 show that girls achieved average standards in line with those of boys.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium reach the same standards as other pupils throughout the school in all subjects. This has been achieved through funding additional support for individual pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Lesson observations and pupils' work show that progress varies between classes. It is slowest in Years 4 and 5. The progress of pupils in these and other classes has been affected by the high number of supply teachers used to cover staff absence and a resulting loss of continuity in learning and progress.
- Pupils are making rapid gains in reading and writing. This is because teachers are now better at teaching young children the sounds that letters make, they hear pupils read regularly and they give pupils plenty of opportunities to write in different subjects about things that interest them.
- Pupils are joining Year 1 with better personal skills and literacy skills than in the past. In a national check of their knowledge of the sounds letters make, Year 1 pupils achieved well. These gains are the result of effective provision in the previous two years in the pre-school and the Reception classes.
- In lessons observed in the Reception class, children did not make good progress from typical starting points for their age on entry because they spent too long sitting and listening and the teaching aids they were given were not always suitable for young children.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational learning needs receive helpful additional support from teaching assistants. This group of pupils make expected progress towards their targets, although these are not always very ambitious in prompting the pupils to make even greater progress over time.
- The small number of children with minority ethnic heritages make the same progress as their classmates.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because there is not enough good teaching to promote good progress. Nevertheless, there are examples of good practice and there are teachers in the school who have the skills to improve the performance of those who require improvement.

- Pupils are not challenged effectively in some lessons or parts of lessons. For example, in a reading lesson pupils were asked to work on their own, writing down any adjectives they could find in their reading books. This activity was boring and did not develop reading skills, a love of reading or widen the pupils' vocabulary.
- Teaching in mathematics is weaker than teaching in English. For example, in mathematics lessons, explanations are sometimes unclear and teachers do not choose teaching aids that help pupils understand topics such as multiplication and shape and space.
- Teaching in mathematics also requires improvement because work is not always planned well. This can mean that one week pupils are doing quite difficult division problems and the next they are doing very basic times table work. Knowledge and recall of times tables is considerably below the level expected in Year 5.
- Marking does not always tell the pupils how well they have learnt the skills being taught and how they can improve their work. In lessons, some teachers do not give pupils clear guidance that helps them understand ideas and skills they find difficult.
- Activities for pupils who need extra help sometimes lack challenge. For example, in one class pupils were simply writing out times tables and in another they spent much more time copying out questions than they did answering the questions.
- Staff in the Pre-school and Reception classes keep good records of the children's learning. They check carefully the children's skills and experiences when they start school and build up good records of the children's progress by observing them at work and play.
- Teachers make very effective use of the school gardens, field and forest. As a result, pupils are knowledgeable about the natural world and caring of the environment and wildlife. Year 1 pupils loved having their photographs taken next to shelters they made as follow-up work to a reading about the Israelites from the Old Testament.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most pupils behave well around the school, as school records and comments made by parents and carers confirm. They work cooperatively and show very good social skills. Pupils told inspectors that there is some name calling and a handful of pupils who do not behave well. They added that staff sort out any problems quickly.
- Pupils often show great enthusiasm for learning. They want to answer questions and take care over their work. However, in lessons where teaching requires improvement they sometimes work slowly and talk to each other about things unconnected with the lesson.
- Pupils are proud of their school. This is shown in how tidy they keep their cloakrooms and ensure that the playground is free of litter.
- The school makes great efforts to celebrate the range of faiths in the world and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Pupils say bullying is rare. They talk with understanding about different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying and racism. Almost all parents and carers say that when bullying has

occurred, it has been dealt with well.

- Pupils know how to keep safe in a range of situations. They learn well about sensible risk taking through visits to outdoor centres, working in their own forest school and playing on the climbing frame, balance beam and tyres.
- Pupils have many opportunities to play their part in the smooth running of the school, meet people in the local community and help communities in different parts of the world. For example, the school supports Fair Trade and has links with Tanzania that give the pupils a rounded understanding of life in an African country.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is a passionate and ambitious leader. Her leadership has achieved marked improvement in teaching and learning despite having to manage a high turnover of staff and a high level of staff absence. The great majority of parents and carers who shared their views are very positive about the headteacher's leadership.
- The headteacher is determined that every pupil will succeed. She is tenacious when working to remove any barriers that may be holding pupils back. Parents spoke with gratitude of how she has helped their families during times of difficulty.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders check each half term how well pupils are learning. They observe lessons, look in books and analyse carefully the results of assessments. This gives them a good understanding of how to improve standards in their areas of responsibility.
- The headteacher challenges inadequate performance which has resulted in improving the quality of teaching. The performance management of staff is very well managed. Decisions about pay are closely linked to the effectiveness of staff and how successfully they meet targets set for them.
- The local authority has provided expertise and resources to help improve teaching and learning. This has raised standards in English and in mathematics. However, standards in mathematics are still not high enough.
- Staff receive helpful professional development opportunities and make the most of them. For example, those responsible for Key Stages 1 and 2 have attended leadership training provided by the local authority. This positive experience has increased their confidence and ability to drive improvement and hold colleagues to account for the progress of the pupils.
- The school development plan accurately identifies what the school needs to do to improve.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well promoted. The school grounds include wonderful areas for play, exploring, learning and reflecting. Pupils were thrilled to tell of all the things they do in the peace garden, the jubilee garden, the faith garden and the forest school. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard, especially the values that are at the heart of all that the school does.
- Pupils have plenty of opportunities to enjoy art, music and learn about the lives of people in other parts of the United Kingdom and around the world.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are fully informed about how the school is performing through reports from the school's leaders and by making regular visits to the school and lessons. They set targets for the headteacher and check carefully how well these are being met. Governors monitor the impact of spending closely to ensure that the school budget, including pupil premium, is being used efficiently and is helping identified pupils make better progress. They ensure that requirements for the safeguarding of pupils are met.

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	103837
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	400665

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachael Thornton
Headteacher	Linda Perkins
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2010
Telephone number	01384 818295
Fax number	01384 818297
Email address	lperkins@st-mary-ki.dudley.sch.uk

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