

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Elliotts Hill, Brixton, Devon, PL8 2AG

Inspection dates

6–7 December 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.

- Teaching over time requires improvement. Before the beginning of this school year, the school went through a period of difficulty during which teaching was weak.
- Pupils' progress and achievement have faltered as a result of previous weaknesses in teaching. Some pupils have gaps in their learning. Pupils' progress from their different starting points is not yet good enough to make up for previous gaps in their learning.
- Pupils are not always given enough time in lessons so that they can judge for themselves the progress they make and set their own learning targets.
- The firm actions of leaders and the interim executive board (governors) have not yet had time for teaching and achievement to improve to good..
- The arrangements for the future leadership and governance of the school are not yet finalised.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is drawing well on the expertise and experience of staff in the two other schools in the partnership to promote improvement. This has widened opportunities for staff to support and learn from each other.
- Staff new to the school have settled exceptionally well and working relationships are very positive and productive.
- As a result of better teaching, pupils' achievement is quickly improving and attainment is now rising across the school.
- Relationships are very positive. Pupils feel safe and demonstrate a strong desire to learn. They enjoy coming to school and behave considerably.
- Leaders check up on pupils' achievement robustly through observing lessons and by tracking pupils' individual progress very regularly.

Information about this inspection

- Seven lessons were observed, including joint observations with senior staff. The inspector also observed an assembly.
- Meetings were held with staff, members of the interim executive board (governors) and groups of pupils.
- A discussion was held with a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- The inspector took account of the six responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and information from the school's recent survey of parents' and carers' opinions. Parents' and carers' views were also gathered from letters and informal conversations.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at documents, including the school improvement plan, school checks on teaching and progress, records relating to attendance, the school's numerical data on pupils' progress, and analysis of samples of their work.

Inspection team

Peter Clifton, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller-than-average primary school. The pupils are taught in two classes. Both classes have new teachers who joined the school in September 2012.
- Since January 2012, the school has been working with the United Schools Federation (a two-school federation comprising St Catherine's Church of England and St Michael's Church of England primary schools) in a management partnership to provide temporary leadership for the school.
- There is a proposal to extend this federation to all three schools in 2013.
- The executive headteacher took over leadership responsibility of the school in November 2011.
- The local authority appointed an interim executive board (a temporary arrangement to strengthen governance of the school) to replace the governing body in June 2012.
- Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra funding provided to support certain groups of pupils) is average.
- Pupils are educated on-site. There is no regular alternative provision off-site.
- The school's most recent results cannot be compared to the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum standards for pupils' attainment and progress, because there were not enough pupils to make such comparisons meaningful.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching over time is consistently good or better so that pupils make good progress by:
 - utilising the strength of the partnership, for example, to share expertise through coaching, observing high-quality teaching and monitoring how well groups of pupils learn in lessons
 - giving pupils more time in lessons to assess their own and each other's work
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to set their own individual targets.
- Secure the long-term leadership of the school by finalising partnership arrangements.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' learning and achievement went through a period of decline after the previous inspection. During this time, pupils' rates of progress dipped and achievement from their starting points was not good enough.
- Effective action taken by leaders has now reversed this trend. The school's records show that achievement is improving sharply, but progress is not yet good. The boost in progress has been across all years and for different groups. This includes disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as pupils supported through pupil premium funding. Accelerated gains have been made, particularly over the last three months, in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Parents and carers acknowledge that the school has been through a difficult time when their children did not do very well. They remain supportive and confident in the school and are now seeing improvement. Pupils comment that they are now enjoying school more because much more is expected from them in their lessons.
- While numbers in some year groups are small, children typically start school with knowledge, skills and understanding that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. In 2012, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 was below average. The Year 6 pupils did not make enough progress, particularly in writing, from their starting points in Year 3.
- The situation now has improved. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are confident in their use of vocabulary and this is reflected in their writing. Their calculation and problem-solving skills are improving quickly. They are currently working at or above age-related expectations and are on track to make at least expected gains in progress.
- Pupils in Year 2 are working at or above age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Different groups of pupils made good progress when adding numbers mentally in different ways, including counting to the 'nearest 10'.
- In Reception, the children learn well alongside Year 1 pupils, for example when learning different letter sounds, listening to stories, and talking about buying and selling when going on a 'train journey'. With individual support, they are beginning to write out simple words. They play confidently in the outside area.
- Readers in Year 1 use their knowledge of the sounds of letters well to help them to read a broad range of words. By Year 2, these skills have developed well and more-able readers read a range of books fluently and with understanding. Older pupils are developing good reading habits. They have clear preferences for different authors, but rightly comment that they would like a broader range of books to choose from in the library.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, teaching has not been strong enough to promote pupils' good achievement and, therefore, requires improvement. The more recent good and sometimes outstanding teaching, as observed during the inspection, has not had sufficient time to enable pupils to make up lost ground.
- Opportunities for the pupils to develop self-assessment skills, for instance through looking at each other's work in detail to decide what they have achieved, are underdeveloped. As a result, pupils are not sufficiently involved in setting their own targets for improvement in lessons.
- Relationships between staff and pupils have developed rapidly and are strong. Pupils want to do well and comment that they now feel challenged to do their best. Pupils work with confidence and perseverance on individual tasks and in groups.
- Learning typically moves at a brisk pace because lessons are now well planned and delivered. High-quality teaching enabled the pupils of different abilities to explore and investigate

differences between the mean, median and mode using different sets of numbers.

- A significant strength of teaching is the variety of activities used to inspire and motivate the pupils. Role play, lively discussion and good-quality questioning were used to think about different characters in a story. This enabled younger pupils to explore whether *Mr Wolf* might be kind, cunning or angry. Older pupils, similarly, identified many different ways to describe gargoyles using simile, metaphor and personification.
- Teaching assistants provide valuable support to different groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. For example, they help them to extend and improve sentences. They provide valuable support to teachers to ensure that the distinctive needs of Reception children are met.
- The use of information and communication technology is a regular feature of lessons and this is helping to boost pupils' skills such as calculation in mathematics and sentence writing in literacy.
- Marking is detailed and helpful. It gives pupils regular information about what they have done well and what could be improved. Pupils frequently respond to these comments.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Older pupils comment that they have enjoyed improved opportunities for learning recently, and that they get praised for their contributions. Pupils are courteous towards each other. They behave sensibly and know each other well.
- In lessons, pupils respond well to any request made by the teacher, and readily take the initiative to organise their own resources. They are proud of their work. They relished the opportunity to read their writing describing what they would put in their 'magic box'.
- Parents, carers and staff express the view that pupils' behaviour is consistently well managed. This includes those pupils who find it difficult to concentrate without additional support. The school's written records show no evidence of any serious misbehaviour or bullying. Pupils say there are a few minor ongoing incidents which are yet to be fully resolved but that they are confident in the adults who look after them.
- Pupils are aware of cyber-bullying and the potential misuse of the internet and mobile phones. The 'life-skills' programme has given them a clear understanding about the dangers of smoking and alcohol, and how to keep themselves safe on roads.
- Pupils are punctual to school and their attendance is very regular.

The leadership and management are good

- Good teamwork has been rapidly established. The executive headteacher and other leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching, because monitoring of lessons has been very regular and insightful. Teachers value the support given and the opportunities they have had to visit other schools, such as observing how children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught. These arrangements have not yet been fully exploited.
- The school's current leadership has responded well to issues identified in the previous inspection report. The good and sometimes outstanding teaching observed, which is promoting rapid progress, is the result of strong and determined leadership. Improvement has been promoted in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupil premium funding has been used to provide additional resources and individual support. This includes better access to computers and programmes to develop pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. It has also supported the introduction of systematic teaching of letters and their sounds to improve reading.
- Leaders have improved the way they track the progress of individual pupils and are quick to intervene should any pupil be in danger of falling behind. They have drawn in high-quality support, from partner schools, to help meet the needs of those pupils who are disabled and

those who have special educational needs, particularly those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.

- Links with the local community are improving. The school has strengthened pupils' cultural awareness through links with a school in Finland and exploring issues such as fair trade. Pupils' equality of opportunity to do well is improving quickly and discrimination is not tolerated.
- The support provided by the local authority has helped to secure improvement. Intervention has strengthened leadership of the school as well as governance by the interim executive board.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The interim executive board has brought additional significant experience and expertise into the school. It has forged links with governors from partner schools. Steps taken to secure the longer-term leadership of the school are well advanced but not yet finalised. Executive board members are well informed about teaching quality and pupils' progress from school's records. They have a good understanding of how the pupil premium money has been spent and have checked that it is securing improvement for these pupils. They are knowledgeable about the link between pay levels and the quality of teaching and leadership. Members of the interim executive board have undergone extensive training. Safeguarding requirements are met. All staff have been trained recently to update their knowledge about child protection.

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	113478
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	401373

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	31
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Helen Crossfield
Executive Headteacher	Martin Harding
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 April 2010
Telephone number	01752 880436
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