

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Cheetham Hill Road, Dukinfield, Cheshire, SK16 5LB

Inspection dates 18–19 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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- Some teachers do not expect enough of pupils in lessons and they provide work that is too easy for them. Lessons are not always fast enough to keep pupils interested.
- Pupils reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. However, too few pupils make good progress, especially in English.
- Leadership and management are not yet good and action plans lack a focus on raising achievement.
- Though there have been recent changes to the monitoring of the quality of teaching and tracking of pupils' progress, they have not been rigorous enough to ensure teaching and the progress made by pupils are consistently good or better.

The school has the following strengths

- Although not fast enough, the school is now improving. The leadership team, including the governing body, is giving more attention to improving teaching and pupils' progress.
- There is some good teaching across the school.
- Pupils work hard in lessons and when they have the opportunity listen carefully to one another's ideas.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are very well supported and make good progress.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. They work and play happily together and provide a warm welcome to visitors because they are proud of their school.
- Relationships are very positive, pupils enjoy school and the range of activities provided for them.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons, of which one was a joint observations with the headteacher. They also observed small group sessions delivered by teaching assistants, a Forest School session delivered by an external coach and listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, a local authority representative and school staff.
- Inspectors took account of 23 on-line questionnaires (Parent View) and 108 responses from a parental questionnaire distributed by the school.
- A range of documents were looked at, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing and the improvement plan, pupil progress information, checks on the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. They also examined work in pupils' books.

Inspection team

Louise Murphy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bimla Kumari

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a slightly smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- Most pupils are from a White British background and the majority speak English as their first language.
- There have been a number of changes to staff since the last inspection.
- The school meets the government's floor standard, which is the minimum expected for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school hosts a before- and after-school club which is independently managed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is good or outstanding in order to raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress by:
 - making sure expectations of what pupils can do are equally high in all classes and work is set that is hard enough so that all pupils do their best
 - increasing the pace of learning so that pupils do not spend too long listening to the teacher and get started on the main activity more quickly
 - making sure that pupils always understand what they are reading.
- Improve the impact of the school leaders by:
 - improving the monitoring of teaching and the checking of pupils' progress as they move from year to year to ensure all teaching is effective
 - making sure that actions put into place are sharply focused on increasing the rate of progress for all pupils
 - providing opportunities for staff to observe outstanding practice in other schools.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because it is not yet good. Children start school in Reception class with skills and knowledge typically expected for their age, they make expected progress and start Key Stage 1 broadly in-line with national levels.
- Progress is uneven across the school and pupils leave Year 6 with broadly average levels of attainment.
- Although progress is improving overall it is not yet good enough and in some subjects, progress is slower than in others. An increasing number of pupils are now making good progress in mathematics but this is not consistent in all years and not in English because pupils are not always set hard enough work.
- Pupils who read to inspectors were enthusiastic about reading and demonstrated a good use of letters and sounds to read new words. Pupils performed well in the national Year 1 reading assessment. However, pupils do not always fully understand what they are reading and this restricts their progress to move on to harder books. Attainment in reading is broadly average by the time pupils leave Year 2 and 6.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. This is because their progress is closely checked, the school leader responsible for this area works well with external agencies and pupils receive well-focused support from teachers and knowledgeable teaching assistants.
- Since the last inspection the attainment of boys in mathematics has improved and boys and girls at school now attain at similar levels.
- Those pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium grant make similar progress to their peers. The school has provided one-to-one tuition and supplements the cost of school trips to make sure that pupils are able to engage in learning and other activities.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching varies across the school and there is some good teaching. However, overall teaching requires improvement because it is not yet good enough to promote consistently good progress.
- In lessons that require improvement the pace is not brisk enough and teachers talk for too long when they are introducing a lesson. As a result, pupils become distracted and there is not sufficient time left for the main activity.
- In other lessons teachers do not use the information they know about pupils successfully and work is too easy. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. For example, in one mathematics lesson pupils were adding two numbers together using a number line. Many could do this easily and even when extra work was provided a number of pupils were sitting for periods with nothing to do. In another lesson, counting baubles on a Christmas tree was not difficult enough and pupils lost interest.
- A positive feature of teaching is the marking of pupils' work. Teachers mark work regularly and tell pupils what they need to do to improve. This good advice is appreciated by pupils as they understand what they have done well and how to make their work even better.
- In good lessons activities sustain pupils' imagination. For example, in Year 6, pupils created a shelter and built small fires in Kelly Kettles to boil water in the forest environment within the school grounds. Pupils were very enthusiastic and proud of the work that they had completed as a result of being involved in Forest School activities. Numeracy skills were developed successfully through recording different birds and drawing maps.
- In two classes pupils made good progress in writing when they looked together at pieces of pupils' work. Teachers ensured pupils applied their writing skills to improve the writing samples.

Pupils rose to the challenge and very skilfully suggested improvements.

- Teaching assistants support small group and one-to-one work effectively because they question pupils well and have good subject knowledge. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to be certain that work provided for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is at the correct level to help them make good progress.
- In the best lessons pupils are given the opportunity to talk to their partners and share ideas; they also assess their own work and the work of others which encourages them to think more deeply about their learning.
- Reading is taught regularly in all classes. Teaching assistants lead one-to-one reading sessions which are helping pupils to improve their reading skills. Teachers do not always question pupils enough to ensure they understand fully what they have read.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well and are keen to learn. In lessons and in the playground pupils share resources sensibly and enjoy contributing their ideas when they work together in pairs or in small groups. Behaviour is not yet outstanding because pupils become distracted when teachers talk for too long.
- Pupils take their responsibilities seriously. School council members were very keen to talk about their efforts to get the correct apparatus for the trim trail. They canvassed the ideas of other pupils and then visited parks to look at equipment and decide which pieces pupils at St. Mary's would prefer.
- Relationships between pupils are very good. Year 6 pupils enjoy Fridays when they meet up with their friends in Reception to play and eat together. Family groups within the school consist of groups of pupils from different classes who come together for specific activities. The artwork produced by these groups is on display in the shared resource area. Pupils are proud of this work and rightly so because it is of a very high standard.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the improved attendance figures. The school systems to promote attendance are rigorous and most attend regularly but too many pupils take holidays during term time.
- Pupils feel safe at school and have a good understanding of different forms of bullying. They explain the difference between bullying and falling out. Pupils agreed that if there were any bullying in school it would be dealt with quickly by adults.
- Responses from parents indicate that the overwhelming majority of parents are supportive of the school and feel that their children are happy and kept safe.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- There have been a number of changes to staff since the previous inspection. Staffing is more stable and all staff share the headteacher's clear view of the direction that the school should be taking. This is confirmed by the unanimously positive questionnaire responses returned by staff.
- The restructured senior leadership team has improved the focus on improving teaching and raising attainment. However, systems and the roles of staff in checking the work in their areas of responsibility are not yet fully developed. New systems are not yet sufficiently embedded to show an impact on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.
- For example, the leadership team checks the effectiveness of teaching and provides staff with information about how to improve. As yet, the system is not fully effective and identified weaker aspects have not been resolved. Teaching is starting to improve but teachers do not yet have enough opportunities to observe outstanding practice.
- The tracking of pupils' progress is improving and information is now being used more effectively. Although the system is not yet securing good progress in all years, success can be seen in the

good progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Through performance management teachers are held to account for pupil progress and do not progress through the pay scales unless their work is effective.

- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. There is now a firm focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. After-school activities and trips add to pupils' enjoyment of learning.
- The local authority has provided valuable support to the school especially when the headteacher was newly appointed. However, support has decreased as school leaders have demonstrated their capacity to improve standards further.
- Safeguarding meets requirements and gives no cause for concern.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school including the quality of teaching. They review data and recognise that pupils' achievement as well as attainment requires improvement. To raise attainment they approved the appointment of two learning mentors to work with pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. The intention is to enable these pupils to receive more help to overcome any difficulties, to increase their ability to learn and make good progress. This also confirms they are committed to providing equal opportunities for all pupils. The governing body manages the budget well, participates in relevant training and ensures teachers' progression through the pay scale is linked to how well pupils perform.

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	106240
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	400830

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr. Oliver O'Doherty
Headteacher	Jon Murray
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2010
Telephone number	0161 368 4824
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