

St Mary's Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Broadway, Derby, DE22 1AU

Inspection dates

17 - 18 January 2013

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.

- From their starting points, most pupils make good progress and achieve well throughout the school.
- A high proportion of teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning, particularly to those who are new to the English language.
- The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and teaches subjects through interesting topics and themes. Good use is made of information and communication technology to support learning.
- Leaders, including the governing body, have successfully improved the school and it is well placed to continue to improve. The headteacher is well respected by staff, has been relentless in her pursuit of improvement and has been a key driver of change.
- Pupils are proud of their school, behave well, and are polite and respectful towards each other and to visitors.
- Staff care for pupils well and pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and feel safe. This is reflected in their rapidly improving attendance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although pupils make good progress in developing reading, writing and mathematics skills, their achievement in mathematics is not as strong as in reading and writing.
- The quality of teachers' marking and feedback in pupils' mathematics books is less strong than in pupils' English books. Consequently, it has less impact on pupils' improved learning.
- Not all teachers check pupils' work often enough in lessons. As a result, it is not always recognised quickly enough when pupils need further support or challenge.
- The governing body could make better use of data about pupils' performance to ask more searching questions of school leaders.
- The school does not engage with some parents and carers as well as it could do.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 teachers teaching a total of 24 lessons. Two of these were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors gathered the views of parents and carers by taking account of 70 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also spoke informally to a number of parents and carers on the playground as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including school improvement plans, documents showing how leaders check teachers' work, and the school's systems to check the suitability of employees who work with children. Inspectors also checked work in pupils' books and the school's records of pupils' progress.
- Meetings were held with the school's senior leaders, members of the governing body, a local authority representative, and two groups of pupils.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Jeremy Spencer, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Aileen King

Additional Inspector

Keith Brown

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background. A larger than average proportion are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- A higher-than-average proportion of pupils leave or join the school partway through their primary school education.
- Fewer pupils than average are known to be eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium (additional government funding). However, the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has risen sharply in recent years.
- The proportions of pupils supported at school action, school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs are broadly average.
- Breakfast and after-school clubs operate on the school site but are not managed by the governing body. This means that they are subject to separate inspection.
- The latest results for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2012 indicate that the school meets the current government floor standards (which set the minimum standards and progress pupils should make).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement so that it is as strong in mathematics as it is in English and improve the quality of teaching, so that all teaching is consistently good and more is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers check pupils' work more frequently in lessons to identify more quickly when they need further support or challenge
 - ensuring that the quality of teachers' marking and feedback to pupils is as good in mathematics as it is in English.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the governing body make better use of published information about the performance of different groups of pupils to enable them to ask leaders more challenging questions
 - engaging parents and carers into the life of the school more effectively, including those who are difficult to reach, by consulting with them more frequently and by making better use of the school's website to share information with them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children begin the Nursery with skills that vary considerably from year to year, but which are typically below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because staff know them well and plan enjoyable activities to meet their needs. During the inspection children were observed working and playing contentedly and confidently together in a positive atmosphere, with well-established routines.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1. In 2012 a higher proportion of pupils than the national average achieved the expected standard in phonics (the sounds that letters make). Pupils usually leave Year 2 with standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are broadly in line with average.
- Pupils make expected progress as they move through Key Stage 2; however, the progress they make in mathematics has historically not been as strong as in English. Assessment information at the end of Year 6 in 2012, the latest school data about pupils' progress and work in pupils' books indicate that although a small gap remains, it is closing quickly and securely. As a result, pupils leave Year 6 with standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. This constitutes good progress from their starting points and means that they are well prepared for the next phase of their education.
- Different groups of pupils achieve well, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and pupils who are new to the English language. Pupils supported through additional government funding (the pupil premium) also make good progress from their starting points; gaps between the standards they achieve and those of other pupils are narrowing. This is because the school tracks the progress of these pupils carefully and successfully ensures that learning activities meet their needs. The school also uses additional funding creatively and effectively to remove barriers to learning, for example by providing additional social and emotional support to pupils and families through the 'school social worker'.
- The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire, or who spoke to inspectors during the inspection, believe that their child makes good progress at the school. Some parents were worried that larger class sizes may have a negative impact on pupils' achievement. Inspectors found that good teaching ensures that pupils make good progress in most classes, including those with higher pupil numbers.

The quality of teaching is good

- School leaders have successfully improved the standard of teaching since the last inspection. As a result, the quality of teaching is mostly good with some outstanding practice evident. Teaching is lively, the pace of learning is usually brisk and activities are well matched to pupils' abilities. This enables pupils to make good progress from their starting points.
- Teachers build strong and trusting relationships with pupils, a fact that was evident in lessons observed by inspectors during the inspection, as pupils didn't hesitate to ask for help if they required it. Teachers plan exciting lessons for pupils which successfully engage their interest. Almost all pupils spoken to by inspectors during the inspection said that they enjoyed learning.
- Teaching assistants are professional in their approach and play an important role in supporting pupils' good achievement. This is because, through effective training, they have an improved understanding of what pupils are capable of achieving and are more closely involved in assessing pupils' progress. Inspectors observed teaching assistants providing very good support to pupils who were new to the English language. Appropriate learning tasks were sensitively rephrased and explained to pupils until they had a clear understanding and were always underpinned by a warm, reassuring smile.
- The quality and impact of teachers' marking on pupils' achievement is variable. In English books,

teachers mark pupils' work consistently well. They clearly outline the next steps of learning that pupils need to take to help them make progress. In mathematics, marking often acknowledges what pupils have achieved, but does not clearly outline how pupils can get better.

- Teachers plan lessons carefully, taking into account pupils' prior learning and achievement. However, once lessons begin, some teachers do not check pupils' work as frequently as they could do. This means that some misconceptions go unnoticed as lessons develop and, on some occasions, pupils repeat work unnecessarily when they would be better suited to moving on to more challenging activities. When this happens, pupils' progress slows and on rare occasions they can become frustrated or bored.
- Teachers question pupils skilfully to develop their understanding and promote their thinking. For example, in an outstanding mathematics lesson in Year 6, the teacher continually challenged pupils to prove their answers to his questions using mathematical language. As the lesson progressed, the pupils began to do this automatically without the teacher's prompts. The teacher's high expectations and brilliantly executed delivery of the lesson led to pupils making outstanding progress in their learning.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is good. Teachers and teaching assistants provide pupils with a good range of interesting activities that ensure they develop a secure foundation on which to build their reading skills.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively by staff to bring learning to life. Teachers use a good range of relevant software to support learning in classrooms and ensure that ICT is built into each subject area and learning topic.
- Most parents and carers who responded to the online inspection questionnaire, or who spoke to inspectors during the inspection, believe that their child is well taught and well looked after at the school. Some parents and carers expressed concerns about the timing of school homework and the expectation that it should be completed over weekends. These concerns were shared and discussed with the headteacher during the inspection.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour has improved since the time of the last inspection. Pupils are courteous and polite to each other and to visitors. The introduction of a new behaviour policy has raised staff expectations and made clear to pupils what constitutes inappropriate behaviour. Furthermore, pupils respond well to the rewards offered for their good behaviour.
- Supported by the improvements made to the quality of teaching, pupils have developed positive, enthusiastic attitudes to learning, which contribute strongly to the good progress they make in lessons.
- Most parents and carers believe that pupils behave well at the school. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about bullying in the school. Inspectors investigated this and found that although there had been some bullying in recent years involving a very small group of pupils (which had been carefully logged by the school), incidents of bullying since September 2012 have been extremely rare. Extensive discussions with pupils confirmed that very little bullying occurs in the school. Pupils have a very good understanding of the different types of bullying that can occur and are confident that staff are capable of resolving any issues should they occur.
- Pupils' attendance is in line with the average for primary schools nationally. However, this masks a sustained rise in attendance from below average levels two years ago. Improved teaching, more stimulating learning topics and increased expectations from school leaders have underpinned the rise in attendance.
- Pupils have a well-developed understanding of safety, including an understanding among older pupils about how to stay safe when using the internet. Pupils were able to explain why visitors to the school should wear an identification badge, and were swift to inform the lead inspector when his adhesive badge dropped off in a classroom!

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides very strong leadership. She has restructured the leadership team completely since the last inspection and has successfully removed inadequate teaching from the school. This has been achieved through effective performance management systems and high quality training and development opportunities for staff. The school's new leaders are enthusiastic, highly skilled and have a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to improve further.
 - The school is an active member of a local learning partnership and there is evidence that this has played an important role in supporting the school's leaders to drive improvement since the last inspection, particularly in improving the quality of teaching.
 - The curriculum (the topics and subjects that pupils learn about) has been overhauled since the last inspection and now provides pupils with an exciting and enjoyable range of learning activities. Teachers ensure that frequent opportunities are planned for pupils to reinforce important literacy and numeracy skills as part of their learning in other subjects and topics. For example, while researching where chocolate comes from, pupils in Years 5 and 6 enjoyed using a scale in an atlas to practise their multiplication skills to calculate the distance that cocoa beans have to travel to the UK.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well throughout the curriculum. Pupils' spiritual development is particularly strong. They engage in thoughtful prayer, sing heartily in assemblies, and gain much from regular, short meditation sessions in their classrooms.
 - Leaders carefully evaluate the performance of different groups of pupils in the school and are successful in their promotion of equality of opportunity. Discrimination is tackled effectively and staff ensure that pupils from different backgrounds feel equally valued.
 - A minority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire express concerns about the quality of the school's leadership and management. Inspectors find that the school is well led and managed. Leadership has been strengthened since the last inspection and as a result, the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and pupils' achievement have improved. However, school leaders acknowledge that they have more work to do to engage parents and carers, particularly through better consultation strategies and through better sharing of information, including through the school's website.
 - The impact of the local authority's support and challenge over time in helping the school to improve has been variable. This is largely due to the fact that there have been frequent changes to the local authority representatives working with the school; six officers have worked with the school in the last six years. This has led to a disjointed approach and a lack of continuity, causing school leaders and the governing body to believe that they have not been challenged as effectively as they could have been. Some elements of local authority support have been stronger than others, including work to promote improved attendance at the school and also work to improve the quality of ICT. School leaders report that there are recent signs of improvement in the quality of support provided by the local authority and the school continues to choose to buy in to the local authority's school support package.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an accurate overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is committed to raising standards further. Performance management systems are used effectively to determine movement along the salary scale for staff, including the headteacher, and play a key role in driving improvement. The governing body works alongside senior leaders to gauge the impact of the school's improvement plan on raising pupils' achievement and also receive regular reports from school leaders to keep up-to-date. Governors know how pupil premium funds are spent and look carefully at the impact it has on pupils' achievement. The governing body understands that it could ask more searching questions of leaders, and provide additional challenge, if governors improved their skills in analysing published data
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about pupils' performance. Governors undertake their statutory duties effectively and appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures are fully in place.

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	112916
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	405435

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	380
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anna Zimand
Headteacher	Amanda Greaves
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2011
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