

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Southam

Daventry Road, Southam, CV47 1PS

Inspection dates 23 –24 January 2013

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

- Pupils' achievement is not consistent across the school: progress is better in Key Stage 2 than in the Foundation Unit and in Key Stage 1.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 have fallen over the last two years and pupils' progress has been too slow. There are now clear signs of improvement at Key Stage 1 with better progress currently being made.
- Pupils capable of doing harder work are not given enough challenge to make sure they reach their full potential.
- Teaching in the Foundation Unit and in Years 1 and 2 does not move pupils onto their next steps in learning quickly enough.
- Frequent changes in leadership since the last inspection have held back the pace of improvement. Many key staff are either new to their post or lack sufficient experience and expertise effectively to support the acting headteacher.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils achieve well in Key Stage 2. Current Year 6 pupils have made outstanding progress since joining Year 3.
- Teaching is often good at Key Stage 2. It is effective in enabling all pupils to make steady and some excellent progress.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, showing positive attitudes to learning. Pupils respect each other and they feel safe in school.
- The acting headteacher currently in post has worked effectively in collaboration with the governing body to improve teaching and pupils' achievement. The actions they have taken are beginning to have an impact.

Information about this inspection

- All teachers in school at the time of the inspection were observed teaching. Of the eight lessons seen, seven were observed jointly with the acting headteacher. Pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read their books or their own written work to the inspector.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work in lessons and sampled their work books.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the acting headteacher. The inspector met a group of pupils and held informal discussions with others.
- The inspection took account of 20 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Questionnaire responses from 11 members of staff were analysed.
- A range of school documents were scrutinised, including policies for safeguarding, the school self-evaluation document and school improvement plans, results of the school's monitoring of teaching, tracking of pupils' progress and lesson planning.
- Records of behaviour and attendance were examined.

Inspection team

David Speakman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary is a smaller than average primary school. No alternative or off-site provision is used by the school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. A small number is at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils receiving additional funding through the pupil premium (those known to be eligible for free school meals, children of forces families or in local authority care) is low.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action, at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- This year pupils are taught mostly in mixed-age classes, with a single-age class for Year 6. Because numbers vary considerably in different year groups, the organisation of classes is subject to annual revision. Reception and Nursery children are taught in a Foundation Unit.
- There has been a lot of change in senior leadership. Since the previous inspection, there have been two temporary acting headteachers, the current one being in post until a permanent headteacher is appointed. A member of the school's senior leadership team has been appointed as temporary acting deputy headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that it is good or better by July 2013 by:
 - engaging pupils more actively in independent learning and group activities and spend less time introducing lessons
 - raising the skills of all teachers and teaching assistants in the teaching of reading
 - making sure that all teachers recognise when pupils have achieved what they are intended to learn and then make immediate adjustments to planning and move pupils onto their next steps more quickly
 - providing challenging activities for pupils at all levels of attainment, but in particular the older and more-able in mixed-age classes, so all groups make good progress.
- Raise standards at the end of the Reception Year and by Year 2 to above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics by July 2014 by:
 - making better use of assessment to ensure that all groups of pupils are making good progress, and giving extra support to any who fall behind
 - providing more adult guidance during child-initiated activities in the Foundation Unit
 - improving pupils' knowledge of letters and the sounds they make so they read more accurately
 - improving the neatness of pupils' handwriting and their forming of numbers and letters
 - raising the problem solving skills of all pupils and their ability to use number facts when solving problems.
- Improve leadership and management to ensure better school improvement by:
 - governors establishing, as a matter of some urgency, more stability at all levels of leadership and management

- ensuring those with leadership responsibility have the necessary skills and expertise effectively to support the headteacher in improving the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children start school with knowledge and skills similar to those of most children of their age. Achievement in the Foundation Unit requires improvement. Children make adequate progress in developing literacy and numeracy skills and in their social and emotional development. They make better progress during adult-led activities, but as a result of too little adult guidance during child-initiated activities, good progress is not sustained.
- Progress in Key Stage 1 has been too slow over the last two years and standards in reading, writing and mathematics have fallen to below average. The school's assessment data, validated by inspection evidence, show recent improvement but further improvement is still required. Current progress is at least adequate and, for some, good. In a Year 1 and 2 mathematics lesson, pupils showed good number knowledge and had skills to use these well while solving problems. However, some more-able pupils reverted to counting back, when they were quite capable of mental calculation. The presentation of pupils' work is too untidy with letters and numbers not formed properly.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 dipped in 2012 and was broadly average in English and mathematics, representing adequate progress for all groups from the beginning of Year 3. Current Year 6 pupils have made excellent progress and pupils are working at levels higher than nationally expected for their age. Writing is fluent, well constructed and interesting to read through the use of vivid description and different styles, including poetry. Pupils have good problem solving skills in mathematics and demonstrate a secure understanding of a wide range of topics in mathematics.
- National tests to check on Year 1 pupils' knowledge and understanding of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is well below national averages because this is not taught well enough by staff, who do not have a good enough knowledge of this area. Pupils sound out single letters accurately, but are not familiar enough with the sounds created by joining two or more letters. Even older pupils, who can read fluently, do not demonstrate good enough skills to read unfamiliar words.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and make good progress because work and methods are usually matched closely to their learning needs. Those with a statement of special educational need and those with greatest need are supported effectively by teaching assistants, who provide both academic and the emotional support needed. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress and achieve standards similar to other pupils. Any gaps between the attainment of the small number of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium and that of other pupils are closing with the help of well-targeted support.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching seen during the inspection was either good or required improvement, in equal proportions. School records of the monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress indicate a similar profile, showing that teaching overall requires improvement.
- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers spend too much time at the beginning of the lesson explaining what pupils are going to learn. This often leaves too little time for pupils to work independently or in groups to make the progress they are capable of. In contrast, children

in the Foundation Unit have too little adult guidance when working in activities they choose for themselves, resulting in work that lacks sufficient focus. In classes with pupils of more than one year group, teachers too often fail to make sure that more-able pupils and those from the higher year group receive sufficient challenge to move them on quickly enough in their learning. When the class is organised into mixed-ability groups, lessons are not always managed well enough to provide more-able pupils with enough challenge to excel in their learning.

- More effective teaching ensures the pace of learning is brisk and that activities interest pupils. Investigations in mathematics were very effective in getting both Year 1 and 2 and Year 6 pupils to work out problems for themselves. In both lessons, pupils worked quickly and achieved good standards. Teachers plan excellent opportunities at the end of lessons when pupils review their work and make good quality presentations to the rest of their class.
- Even in some lessons where teaching is good, teachers miss opportunities to accelerate the pace of learning. In a few lessons, it was clear that many pupils were ready to move on to the next steps very quickly. The teachers failed to recognise this and continued with their planned lesson instead of changing plans and moving pupils on to the next steps and enabling them to achieve more.
- Teaching of reading fails to provide pupils with the skills to be able to work out unfamiliar words. Only recently have teachers started daily reading sessions. Their knowledge of the teaching of reading requires improvement, as does the organisation of some reading sessions, where some pupils receive too little direction.
- Small group teaching and individual support for pupils is effective, including for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and pupils for whom the school attracts the pupil premium. There is a strong sense that these pupils are fully included in all the school does, which helps their personal and social development, as well as raising other pupils' awareness that some people require additional support.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. For the very large majority of pupils, positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour contribute well to their learning. Only when teachers talk for too long at the beginning of lessons do pupils sometimes get unsettled, but still cause no disruption. Pupils get fully involved when challenged and motivated by the tasks. The school supports a number of pupils with identified behaviour issues. Adults have done a good job with these pupils, who have learned to work alongside other pupils well and cause no disruption.
 - Pupils respect others, whatever their background, ability or disability. They work well in groups, respectfully taking others' ideas into account and helping each other out. Older pupils are very clear about how well they are doing and their targets. They enjoy school and this is reflected in the above average attendance year by year.
 - Pupils feel safe at school. They say bullying is very rare but are confident that it will be dealt with quickly and fairly. Their awareness of safe situations, including internet safety, is good and they are clear about who to go to if they need help.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed well through the curriculum. Pupils' good moral and social skills have a positive impact on their behaviour. They know the difference between right and wrong. In lessons, a number of opportunities are provided for
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reflection and pupils join in these opportunities enthusiastically. They fulfil their duties, such as playground buddies, house captains or school councillors keenly and with confidence. Their awareness of other cultures is limited.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management have lacked a consistent approach because circumstances beyond the school's control have resulted in many changes in senior leadership since the previous inspection.
 - In a very short time, the acting headteacher has got to grips well with the task of improving the quality of education, pupils' progress and raising standards. She has identified what is done well and where improvement is needed through robust and accurate evaluation of a wide range of relevant observation and information. There is an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and this links sharply to development planning. However, senior leaders are new to post and are still developing their leadership skills.
 - The headteacher has been particularly active in checking teachers' work, identifying effective teaching and any that is inadequate. This has led to improvement in the quality of teaching in some classrooms, but some requiring improvement remains. The headteacher visits classrooms regularly, looks at teachers' planning and checks pupils' work to ensure they are making good progress. Any shortcomings, such as teaching reading, are included as priorities for development and training is being planned.
 - The school's evaluation of individual teaching is carefully linked to decisions about salaries. The setting of clear targets, which relate to the national standards for teaching, to move teaching to good is very recent. A current focus is on how well teachers use assessment information to give support to pupils who are in danger of falling behind.
 - Equality of opportunity is reflected in the narrowing of the gap in the progress of different groups. Funding for pupil premium is wisely spent on individual and small group support for those pupils who qualify and in ensuring these pupils are fully included in all school activities. The effectiveness of this support is clearly seen in the good progress these pupils are making and improved behaviour.
 - The local authority is providing effective support for the school, especially in securing the acting headteacher's secondment from another local authority school and in helping the governors commission the support of a leading educationalist. The local authority provides support through discussing the setting of clear targets for improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The governing body has made some difficult decisions that have helped the school survive significant turbulence in staffing. Governors are regular visitors to the school. They have rightly focused their attention on supporting changes in leadership, challenging senior leaders to raise standards. They understand assessment data clearly and know how the school is performing compared to other schools. They have high levels of relevant expertise and consequently are able to contribute well to the strategic planning for development. They set clear targets in managing the performance of the headteacher and staff, having made some important decisions, linking staff effectiveness to pay levels and tackling inadequate teaching. They ensure statutory requirements are met, particularly for safeguarding, where vetting procedures for staff and visitors are thorough and all training, including their own, is up to
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date. They make careful financial decisions, ensuring that funding from the pupil premium is used well in supporting those pupils who require additional support and to ensure their full inclusion in all school activities.

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	125708
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	402351

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	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Lambe
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Price
Date of previous school inspection	11-12 February 2010
Telephone number	01926 812512
Fax number	01926 812521
Email address	head3505@we-learn.com

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