

St Mary's CoE VA Primary School

Ladywell Road, Tunstall, Stoke-on Trent, Staffordshire, ST6 5DE

Inspection dates 5–6 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The school is a thriving centre for learning that sets the highest expectations for staff, pupils and parents. It broadens pupils' horizons, raises aspirations and gives them a valuable and exciting start to their education.
- Children in Nursery and Reception are given an excellent start and they make outstanding progress especially in their personal, social and emotional development.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding.
- An exciting curriculum brings the very best out of pupils.
- Pupils enjoy school immensely. They know that they are responsible for their own learning and behaviour; they have extremely positive attitudes to both. They always feel safe in school and their attendance is above average.
- Leaders, guided and supported by an inspirational headteacher, have improved the school at an exceptional rate since the previous inspection.
- The governing body knows how important the school is to the community and makes sure that the highest quality work is maintained.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons and parts of lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils, members of staff, the governing body, parents and a representative from the local authority.
- Also taken into account were 17 responses via the online questionnaire Parent View.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including: national assessment data and the school's own assessments; the school's evaluation of its work; local authority reports; curriculum information; samples of pupils' work; and safeguarding documents.

Inspection team

Kevin Johnson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Patricia Cope	Additional Inspector
Kirsteen Rigby	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British. Approximately one third of the pupils are of Pakistani heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil-premium funding, is well above average.
- An average proportion of pupils are supported by school action.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- Before- and after-school care is available on site. This is not managed by the governing body and receives a separate report.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the numbers of pupils who attain Level 5 in writing and mathematics by:
 - using every opportunity for pupils to talk about their experiences so that they have more choices of vocabulary for their writing
 - giving pupils more opportunities to try out and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge in different ways across different subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress from starting points that are generally well below those typically expected for their age. They are very keen and ready to learn because of the way staff carefully nurture children's behaviour and social skills. Outstanding teaching and exciting chances for children to learn for themselves mean that most children work close to the levels expected for their age, in all that they do, by the time they leave Reception.
- Children from Pakistani backgrounds who enter Nursery with English as an additional language, thrive under very skilful support from staff members. Phonics, (letters and the sounds that they make) is taught particularly well to all children. Teachers are very attentive to those pupils whose language development needs and extra boost.
- The pace set in the Early Years Foundation Stage, driven by the highest expectations, continues throughout Years 1 and 2. There has been a clear rising trend in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics since the previous inspection. Standards in 2012 were average at the end of Year 2. The impact of continuous progress is seen in current school assessments and children's work. The rising trend in attainment is on track to continue and the large majority of pupils make better than expected progress.
- The picture is similar in Years 3 to 6. Most pupils currently make better than expected progress because that is what is expected of them. The school is on track to raise the level of attainment in writing and mathematics seen in 2012. Reading was, and still is, above average. The school's target is that pupils will reach Level 4 by the end of Year 5, a year earlier than expected nationally.
- There is a consistently strong focus on reading and writing underpinned by exciting curriculum activities. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 are exploring the writing opportunities that stem from a recent visit to *The World of Harry Potter* in London. The school uses its 'Big Maths' project imaginatively. All pupils in Years 3 to 6 are grouped according to their needs on a weekly basis in order to focus on skills and help each other. This works very well. It helps to drive outstanding progress. Leaders acknowledge that the next step is to let pupils use those skills in different ways to solve problems related to other areas of learning. Nevertheless, there is no complacency about what can be achieved and leaders recognise that more pupils reaching Level 5 in writing and mathematics is the way forward, despite their outstanding achievement since starting school.
- Pupils read confidently in Year 2. They use the skills that they have learned in phonics lessons to tackle unfamiliar words and make sense of what they read. They enjoy stories and like talking about their favourite characters and authors. By the end of Year 6 pupils are fluent readers and have a wide range of reading interests. They read regularly in school and at home for enjoyment. They have the reading skills needed to find information to help them with other work.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to others from their own starting points. The school does not lower its sights with regard to what is expected of them. Very challenging learning targets, excellent teaching and careful checking on progress make sure that every pupil is on track and doing the best they can.
- Pupils supported by pupil-premium funding, also make better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and gaps between the achievements of groups of pupils are closing rapidly.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- An exceptional feature of teaching is the way in which pupils are involved in measuring their own progress and setting new targets for themselves. Coupled with teachers' excellent marking, which gives clear guidance about how targets can be achieved, pupils are extremely well informed about how well they are doing.
- Another feature is the outstanding contribution from teaching assistants throughout the school. They provide high quality support in classrooms and use every available space outside the classrooms to work intensively with groups and individual pupils. They provide excellent help for all who need it. They are well trained and qualified, highly skilled and valued members of the teaching team.
- No time is wasted in lessons. They start on time and there is a relentless focus on progress and learning from the outset. Lessons are planned well. Teachers know their pupils, and make sure that activities and resources are exactly matched to pupils' different needs so that they always get the best out of them.
- Information and communication technology is used regularly to help pupils learn in groups or independently. Teachers use electronic whiteboards particularly well to hold pupils' attention. Teachers give brief and clear explanations. There is always enough time for pupils to finish their work and achieve what is expected from the lesson.
- In the many outstanding lessons seen during the inspection the constant thread was teachers' very high expectations of all pupils. Questioning to check pupils' understanding and encourage thinking was excellent, so that pupils were always challenged to go the extra step in their learning. Pupils have very good opportunities to test their ideas on others and help each other to find answers to questions. Opportunities to discuss topics and experiences could be used more effectively, especially with older pupils, to widen vocabulary so that they can express their ideas very clearly and accurately, and improve further on their chances of reaching higher levels in writing.
- Relationships in lessons are outstanding. A pupil summed up the confidence that pupils have in their teachers with the comment, 'The staff are lovely.' Pupils know how much they are valued and, as a result, they are always willing to give their best.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour at all times are exceptional. The presentation of work in pupils' books shows the pride they take in their achievement.
- Pupils enjoy a wealth of opportunities, through the curriculum, to experience the excitement of learning, the importance of relationships and the richness of cultures across the world.
- Pupils are invariably polite and well mannered towards adults and each other. They enjoy taking on and carrying out responsibilities.
- Pupils feel entirely safe in school. They speak very highly of the care shown for them by school staff; parents agree wholeheartedly with those views. Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take, including cyber-bullying, and say that it does not exist in their school. They are fully aware of how to avoid dangers out of school and how to keep themselves safe and healthy.
- Attendance is above average and, because of the school's rigorous monitoring and excellent support for families, it continues to improve.
- Pupils contribute a great deal to everyday life and 'can do' ethos of the school. The school council gives all pupils a say in school matters. Pupil 'ambassadors' oversee pupils' positive attitudes and are authorised to reward them. This responsibility is managed sensitively and maturely. Prefects and eco-club members also do their bit to help the smooth running of the school. As one pupil commented, 'It's nice to give awards, take pictures and encourage others.'
- Pupils' excellent all-round personal development and safety stems from the school's well-

established and much praised (by parents and pupils) system of assertive mentoring. This places the responsibility for learning, behaviour, attendance, punctuality and readiness to work squarely on pupils themselves. It acts as a clear measuring stick for parents about their child's overall performance in school.

- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stages of their education.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is entirely focused on providing the very best for the pupils. Her vision is fully shared by all school staff and the governing body. There is excellent teamwork throughout the school and a firm belief among staff in the strength of school leadership. All are fully committed to the school's continued success.
- The school's success is recognised by the local authority which provides very 'light touch' support.
- The other two senior leaders provide outstanding support for the headteacher. They are highly skilled in the classroom and excellent role models for teachers. Their understanding of the school's work, including teaching strengths and what could be better, contributes extremely well to the school knowing how well it is doing and what it needs to do to become even better.
- Excellent systems for managing teachers' performance, that is for checking on teaching and challenging anything less than good, have brought enormous improvement. Teachers know and fully accept that they are responsible for pupils' progress and that the quality of their work should match that set out in the Teachers' Standards. Leaders leave nothing to chance and guidance and training for teachers to keep up to date with and improve their teaching skills is very well planned.
- The excitement and breadth of the curriculum is reflected in the high quality displays of pupils' work throughout the whole school. It engages and challenges, broadens horizons and raises pupils' personal ambitions. Pupils write enthusiastically across a range of different subjects. Further developments to build on speaking skills and the use of mathematics are in hand. Enrichment activities including residential visits home and abroad, after school clubs, visits and visitors to school add greatly to pupils' personal development and achievements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body knows the school exceptionally well. It is familiar with national data and where the school's academic performance stands. There is no shortage of challenge for the school and equally strong support for the headteacher's initiatives to successfully drive the school forward. Governors work purposefully with school staff and undertake relevant training to keep up with developments and progress. Statutory duties are fulfilled very efficiently, including those related to safeguarding where systems, policies and procedures meet all government requirements and reflect very good practice. Finances are managed very effectively. Governors have a clear overview of spending on resources, including the way that teachers' performance is linked to pay progression. The use of pupil-premium funding is checked carefully to ensure that no pupils underachieve and that each of them has equality of opportunity.

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	124311
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	402249

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	390
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	S Oxford
Headteacher	G James
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2009
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