

St Mary Immaculate Catholic Primary School

Wathen Road, Warwick, CV34 5BG

Inspection dates

27–28 February 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 are not doing as well as they are capable of in English and mathematics. Despite recent improvement, their achievement is not yet good.
- The pace of learning in lessons is not always brisk enough and so pupils make slower progress than they should.
- Marking in subjects is not always helpful to pupils in explaining what they must do to improve their work and move to the next level.
- Teachers do not always give pupils time to reflect on and correct work that has been marked.
- Subject leaders have only recently started to check and develop the quality of teaching in the areas for which they have responsibility.
- Until recently, governors have not challenged leaders rigorously enough about the school's performance or developed their own independent view of how well the school is doing by gathering evidence for themselves.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has a clear vision of what he wants the school to be like. Plans for improving the school contain the correct areas for development.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress. They are well prepared for Year 1.
- Teaching is improving and more good and outstanding practice can now be found across the school.
- Pupils behave well and show respect for each other, staff and visitors to the school.
- The school provides a caring, safe environment for its pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons, all of them jointly with the headteacher. In addition, he made short visits to other lessons and scrutinised pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, teachers, teaching assistants, members of the governing body, a local authority adviser and, informally, with parents and carers.
- The inspector scrutinised a variety of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plans, behaviour records, and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- The inspector also considered the views expressed in 15 questionnaires returned by school staff.
- Only eight parents and carers responded to the online Parent View survey but the inspector took account of the views submitted by pupils, parents and carers to recent school questionnaires.

Inspection team

Keith Brown, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most primary schools.
- An average number of pupils have minority ethnic heritages, with a similar proportion speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is above the national average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those pupils with a parent in the armed forces.
- The number of pupils receiving extra support through school action is below average but the proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- There are two separate classes for children in Nursery and Reception. Pupils in other years are taught in mixed-age classes.
- No pupils are taught in alternative provision away from the school site.
- The school runs a daily breakfast club.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- In recent years there have been several changes in staffing.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make all teaching consistently good or better and accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring that the teaching is always conducted at a brisk pace
 - providing time for pupils to think about the work that has been marked and to make the appropriate corrections to their work
 - making sure that the good practice in the marking of pupils' work in English and mathematics also takes place in all other subjects.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - subject leaders identify from their monitoring and evaluation of lessons, clear and precise actions which will lead to improvements in the quality of teaching
 - the governing body finds information out for itself about the school's effectiveness so that it is better able to hold the school to account for its work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The achievement of pupils requires improvement because too few pupils make good progress over their time at the school. This is because there is too much variation in the quality of teaching.
- Following their good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils join Year 1 with knowledge and skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. Results in the national assessments at the end Key Stage 1 for reading, writing and mathematics have been broadly average for the last three years. When they leave at the end of Year 6, pupils' results at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics have been broadly average for the last three years.
- Results in the 2012 national phonics screening at the end of Year 1 were below average. In response, the school has introduced improvements to the teaching of how to link letters to the sounds they make (phonics) to younger pupils. Pupils' reading in Key Stage 1 is now improving. Writing is also improving as a result of an increased focus on spelling and grammar.
- This year, the school is tackling weaknesses in reading in Key Stage 2 by teaching pupils more effectively to think more about the meaning of text. They are becoming more confident about reading fluently and on their own.
- Pupils have appropriate calculation skills. However, pupils do not always think about and correct their marked work sufficiently. This year, the school has introduced the teaching of subjects and activities through themes and is providing more opportunities for pupils to explore and record their mathematical work in different subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational make similar progress to other pupils, with an increased number making good progress this year. Their needs are identified early and the work that they are set is matched closely to their abilities. Teachers and teaching assistants help pupils by precisely demonstrating the skills that they need to learn. They teach them the specialist vocabulary for various subjects, and providing appropriate support and challenge.
- The school is developing well-considered strategies to support the pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. Extra staffing, one-to-one tuition, small-group work, music tuition and funding for educational visits are becoming increasingly effective in helping pupils to overcome the barriers they face in their learning. As a result, the two-terms gap in attainment between these pupils and their classmates last year is now closing.
- Although abilities vary widely from year to year, many children start the Early Years Foundation Stage, either in the Nursery Year or Reception Year, with knowledge and skills that are below those typically expected for their age. Around half the children in the Nursery class carry on into the Reception class. The Reception class also admits new entrants from outside the school each year.
- Children flourish in the stimulating environments provided in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes. The needs of individual children are understood by all staff, and activities are planned carefully to meet them. Good progress is made and, by the time children are ready to start Year 1, most are working securely at the level expected for their age in all areas of learning.
- The support given to pupils who start school speaking little or no English is good, and these

pupils make good progress in learning the language. Their skills in mathematics also improve well. Depending on when they join the school, their attainment in English sometimes lags behind others.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Lesson observations, analysis of the work in pupils' books, monitoring undertaken by the local authority and the school's own checks all indicate that teaching is improving. There is now more good or better practice in classes across the school. However, there is not enough consistently good teaching in English and mathematics to ensure good achievement over time.
- Teaching quality requires improvement in lessons where the challenge and pace are not brisk enough. This is sometimes because the teacher talks for too long in parts of the lesson and so pupils' interest starts to wane and they make less progress.
- The school has recently improved its marking policy. Particularly in English and mathematics, teachers now praise work, where appropriate, and give well-focused advice on how pupils can improve. Marking in other subjects does not contain as many helpful comments.
- Teachers do not always give pupils time to think about and correct work that has been marked, so that pupils can move their learning on.
- This year, the school is successfully tackling previous weaknesses in the planning of lessons so that they better cater for the different abilities and needs of pupils. Teachers usually explain clearly what they want pupils to do. Work is carefully modified for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- The classrooms, hall and corridors all feature bright stimulating displays. To help pupils to improve their writing there are clear prompts for learning about the current subjects and themes being studied, as well as examples of good writing.
- In lessons where pupils made good progress, teachers had high expectations and their strong subject knowledge gave pupils confidence. Teachers regularly checked pupils' understanding with carefully tailored questioning and provided appropriate feedback. In a high-quality English lesson, for example, pupils worked well together in groups, shared ideas and the teacher's well-focused feedback resulted in pupils making rapid progress in working out words to connect sentences.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Relationships are positive throughout the school, and pupils listen carefully to adults and to each other. The school has a calm atmosphere. Parents and carers are positive about behaviour in the school.
 - Pupils are eager to learn. They play energetically, but are thoughtful of the safety of others.
 - Attendance is average but improving because the school works well with parents to see that pupils come to school. Any unexpected absence is quickly followed up, making sure that pupils remain safe.
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- Older pupils are keen to take on extra responsibilities and enjoy being assembly monitors, for example. The school council is influential. It has advised on improvements in how playground equipment is used and on improvements made to the school's perimeter fencing.
- Pupils say that bullying is very uncommon, and pupils of all ages were able to describe how to spot and report bullying. Pupils unanimously feel that adults respond quickly and effectively to any concerns that they raise. The school conscientiously records these very rare occurrences and the action taken.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school. Parents and carers agree that the school keeps their children safe.
- Pupils have good awareness of different forms of risk, and know what to do and who to tell if they feel unsafe. Their awareness of e-safety is good. For example, pupils were able to discuss the risks of using social-networking websites.
- The breakfast club helps working families and has improved punctuality. It is well organised and supervised and provides pupils with a range of worthwhile activities.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- This is an improving school but the rate of improvement has not been fast enough to raise its effectiveness to good. Considerable staff changes over the last few years have caused disparities in the quality of teaching and, consequently, pupils' progress has been held back.
 - Leaders have introduced a number of new initiatives to improve teaching, but there has not been time for these to show their full impact. Strategies for subject leaders to monitor and move forward the quality of teaching, including regular lesson observations and more rigorous training for all staff, for example, are becoming established. However, the actions identified by subject leaders from their monitoring and evaluation of teaching are not clear and precise enough in identifying for teachers what they need to do to improve their effectiveness.
 - The school is sharpening its systems to accurately track pupils' progress. Pupils who need extra support are being identified more quickly. Although the school still has further to go, the school's current data show that pupils are now making better progress than in recent years.
 - The headteacher has worked relentlessly to ensure that the current staff, including teaching assistants and teachers who are job-sharing, communicate effectively with each another and focus more sharply on improving the quality of teaching.
 - Governors and staff share the headteacher's determination to move the school forward and ensure that all pupils achieve well. Plans to improve the school are based on accurate self-evaluation. They identify correctly what needs to be done. Staff morale is high.
 - This year, the school is ensuring that teachers' pay and promotion are linked better to the contribution that individual teachers are making to raising standards. Teachers are being held more accountable for the progress of their pupils and for the subjects they lead.
 - The teaching of subjects and activities by linking them together through topics, introduced this
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year, is motivating pupils well. Pupils enjoy the regular 'theme' days. For example, on a recent 'India' day, pupils learned a lot about Indian languages, costumes, customs and dance.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively by visits and visitors, together with a range of popular art, cookery, dance, music and sports activities.
- The local authority provides good support to the school. The linked adviser has arranged for a local leader of education to support the headteacher and has also organised support to improve classroom teaching and subject leadership. Governors noted that local authority training has given them a better insight into their roles.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are increasingly holding the school to account and are improving their ability to challenge leaders. They are now more focused when they visit lessons, so that they know more about aspects of the school's day-to-day teaching and performance. However, they have hitherto relied too much on the information provided by the headteacher. Governors compare the school's performance with that of other schools, and are aware that there is more to be done to improve teaching, raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress. Governors know about the use of additional funds from the pupil premium to improve the attainment of the pupils entitled to it. They are increasingly ensuring that the salary progression of staff is justified by the evidence of teachers' impact on pupils' progress. The school's safeguarding arrangements are meticulously checked by the Chair of Governing Body, who has responsibility for pupils' safety. Consequently, safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements.
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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	125717
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	406325

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	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julia FitzSimons
Headteacher	Robert Gargan
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2011
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