

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

St Mary's Road, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7BU

Inspection dates 1–2 May 2013

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | 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

- Despite some current strengths, teaching has not been consistently good enough over time to enable pupils to achieve as well as they could and progress is too uneven across the school.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics needs improvement as it does not match their achievement in English. Pupils do not get enough practice using mathematics in everyday contexts.
- Work is not always demanding enough to ensure that pupils, particularly the most able, achieve as well as they might.
- The best practice in teaching is not shared widely enough across the school.
- Systems for tracking pupils' progress are not effective or efficient enough.
- Though safeguarding meets requirements, actions the school takes about pupils' safeguarding, protection and behaviour are not recorded in detail.
- The school's plans for future developments are not linked tightly enough to the progress pupils have made or should make in the future.

The school has the following strengths

- There are good, trusting relationships between adults and pupils. As a result, pupils are happy to come to school and this is reflected in above average attendance.
- There are close links with the church and the local community and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- Children get a good start to school, especially in the Nursery.
- The school provides good care and support for pupils and their families.
- Pupils behave well and get on well with one another. They are polite and welcoming to visitors.
- Leaders and managers are improving teaching and results. For example, strong leadership in English has successfully improved pupils' progress in writing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 17 lessons or part lessons, including some joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors talked to pupils about their work and listened to some pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other staff with key leadership responsibilities, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, monitoring information and the safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took account of 14 responses to the online Parent View survey as well as the school's own survey of parents. They also took account of 20 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Hare

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The next largest groups of pupils are of Romany or Gypsy or Black African heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding (the pupil premium), because they are known to be eligible for free school meals, are in the care of the local authority or are children of service families, is well above average. At St Mary's, almost all the pupils eligible for the pupil premium are those entitled to free school meals.
- The school does not meet the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Nursery and a Reception class.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
 - sharing more widely the best teaching in the school
 - making better use of data to ensure that work is more precisely matched to pupils' abilities, especially more able pupils, so that their work is more demanding.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by:
 - ensuring leaders have a clear view of the weaknesses in mathematics teaching and learning and provide a detailed plan for improvement
 - giving pupils more opportunities to apply mathematical skills in other subjects and learn new skills in a meaningful way that relate to their everyday lives.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing a robust tracking system that is shared with and accessible to staff and can be effectively and efficiently used by teachers to plan lessons and leaders and governors to check that all pupils and groups of pupils make good progress
 - ensuring that the provision and practice that effectively safeguard and protect pupils are backed up by more rigorous and detailed record keeping, including that for any behaviour incidents
 - ensuring that school development plans are tightly linked to outcomes for pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children start at the school in the Nursery or Reception class with skills and knowledge well below expectations for their ages. The progress made by pupils of all ethnic backgrounds is not consistently good enough across the school to catch up other pupils nationally and this reflects inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- As a result, attainment, although improving, remains below average overall at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. There is, however, some good progress being made as a result of some strengths in teaching. For example, pupils currently in Year 2 are making faster progress as a result of outstanding teaching.
- Progress in mathematics requires improvement. Achievement in the subject is the weakest area across the school and plans for raising achievement are not as sharply focused as in English.
- Achievement in English is stronger than in mathematics. Reading is the strongest subject in English; attainment in reading is broadly average by the end of Year 6. Progress in writing has improved considerably since the previous inspection although attainment remains below average. In 2012, the Year 6 pupils' good progress in English meant the school was very close to reaching the government's floor standards.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs generally make similar progress to others, which means that their progress is inconsistent across the school and better in reading and writing than in mathematics.
- In the 2012 Year 1 phonics screening check (linking sounds and letters) taken by pupils currently in Year 2, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected result was above average. Most pupils have a secure knowledge of phonics to help them read unfamiliar words and the school is successfully plugging gaps in older pupils' knowledge by providing a daily phonics session for all year groups. By the time they reach Year 6, many are fluent enthusiastic readers who can express preferences and read for enjoyment.
- In the 2012 tests, the attainment of Year 6 pupils who benefited from the pupil premium was almost 16 months behind the other Year 6 pupils in the school in English and over one year behind in mathematics. The gap in both mathematics and English was bigger than that found nationally. Pupils who were eligible for the funding made better progress than others in English, but did not catch up at all in mathematics.
- Children make a good start to school, particularly in the Nursery, and make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They reach average standards in some areas of their personal and physical development and in understanding shape, space and measures but overall attainment remains below average by the time they move into Year 1.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and varies from outstanding to inadequate. Teaching requires improvement because over time the teaching has not been consistently good enough to promote good achievement for pupils currently in the school.
- Staffing difficulties in the early part of this school year had a negative impact on pupils' achievement and the overall quality of teaching, which was unacceptable to the headteacher and governors. They resolved these issues and much of the teaching seen during the inspection was good, but the impact of the difficulties remains.
- However, the stronger teaching, particularly for children in the Nursery, Year 6 and most notably in Year 2, has started to make a positive impact on pupils' progress. For example, Year 2 pupils made excellent progress in an English lesson where they were learning to create glossaries, because the lesson was extremely well planned to meet the needs of all pupils and so they were all fully engaged and very enthusiastic about their work.

- In some lessons, teachers give too little attention to the different abilities of pupils and so, for the most able pupils in particular, work is not demanding enough for them. As a result they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Although teachers know individuals well and have good relationships with pupils, they do not always have sufficient accessible information on the progress of groups in their classes to enable them to plan more effectively, particularly to ensure that they are expecting enough and extending the learning of the more able pupils.
- The teaching of reading is effective because of skilled leadership in the subject.
- Teachers usually mark pupils' work well and provide useful information to pupils about the next steps in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds get on very well together and are happy in this inclusive school. Pupils are polite and helpful to visitors and considerate towards one another.
- Pupils told inspectors that they felt happy and safe in school and enjoyed their lessons. A few older pupils were a little concerned about the amount of rubbish that was thrown over the fence from an adjoining public park. The school is aware of this and is in discussion with the town council to resolve the issue.
- The great majority of pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and on the playground. Behaviour is not outstanding because occasionally some pupils become distracted when activities in lessons are not pitched at the right level to fully challenge them and there are a few pupils whose behaviour in lessons and around the school has to be managed very carefully.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe and have a good understanding of potential dangers, for example when using computers to access the internet.
- In discussion, pupils say that incidents of bullying are rare but if anything does occur, they are confident that staff will sort things out quickly. Pupils understand that bullying can take different forms such as physical, name-calling, cyber bullying or prejudiced-based bullying.
- Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given such as school council members, prefects and school buddies.
- All parents agree that their children are happy in school and most agree that they feel safe, are well looked after and behave well.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, staffing difficulties have impeded the drive by the headteacher and governors to raise achievement and improve teaching. The school is steadily improving and improvements to literacy show that it has the capacity to improve further, but it has not yet produced consistently good teaching over time or good achievement overall.
- Individual pupils' progress is evaluated regularly and accurately. However, systems for tracking progress over time are not efficient or summarised in a form that can be easily shared with all leaders and staff. This restricts teachers' and leaders' ability to use this information to plan appropriate work or monitor the achievements of groups of pupils across the school and plan improvements accordingly. Other than for literacy, plans for improvement are not always rigorous enough or sharply related to outcomes for pupils. This is a particular issue for mathematics, where weaknesses in teaching and outcomes have not been brought together in a single clear analysis.
- The school has focussed on improving literacy. Strong leadership in English has helped to successfully secure broadly average standards in the subject and, most notably, the better progress in writing, which was an issue to improve in the previous inspection.
- Leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching and they can demonstrate success in improving the performance of individual teachers. The school recognises that more work needs

to be done to ensure that learning and progress are consistently good to improve achievement. As yet, examples of the best teaching are not routinely shared with others, for example through observation by other teachers, in order to improve teaching across the school.

- The headteacher and governors have created a happy and harmonious school, which is strongly supported by pupils, parents and staff. The staff and governors are committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils and the school provides a caring community, informed by its Christian values.
- The pupil premium funding is targeted to provide a range of additional support and resources that ensure pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals are not excluded from any aspect of school life, for example, attending theatre trips. Spending decisions make a positive contribution to pupils' emotional, personal and social needs and, notably, have helped to significantly improve the proportion of pupils making good progress in English.
- The subjects taught are planned well to cover topics that engage the interest of pupils and there is an appropriate focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Mathematics is not always linked to other subjects to ensure that pupils have opportunities to apply their skills or learn new skills in a meaningful way that relates to their everyday lives. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well and pupils learn without fear of discrimination.
- Support for pupils who may be potentially vulnerable and the school's work with families and the community are strengths and enables the school to be alert to, and identify, specific needs. Pupils are cared for well and safeguarding systems are in place, which ensure the school keeps pupils safe. There is, however, a lack of rigour and detail in the record keeping, from any initial concerns to the action the school takes in response. This is also the case for any incidents of inappropriate behaviour should they occur. As a result, the results are not easy to analyse.
- The local authority has worked with the school to focus on improving progress and states it will continue to support and challenge the school to meet floor standards.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved since the previous inspection. The structure of the governing body has been revised and meetings provide opportunities for governors to question and challenge the school. There are several new governors and a new Chair, and governors work supportively with school leaders and staff. Governors are familiar with the online information on pupils' achievement such as the Ofsted 'dashboard' to inform them how the school is doing compared to other schools nationally. They know the school's strengths and areas to improve. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are not robust enough for governors to have a more in-depth view of overall progress across the school or the progress of individual groups. For example, governors agree how the pupil premium funding is spent but do not have a clear view of the impact of the spending decisions. The governing body knows about the quality of teaching in the school and how the school rewards good teaching and has worked with the headteacher to tackle underperformance. Governors ensure performance management is in place. Governors are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and are taking the right action to improve further. A good deal of training has been undertaken, with a current focus on better recruitment. Safeguarding meets statutory requirements, although monitoring of school records lacks rigour.

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

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| Unique reference number | 118754 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 412722 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| 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 | 236 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | James Mowbray |
| Headteacher | Amanda McGarrigle |
| Date of previous school inspection | 10–11 November 2009 |
| Telephone number | 01322 665212 |
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