

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Northwood Road, Whitstable, Kent CT5 2EY

Inspection dates 15–16 May 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 achieving as well in mathematics as they are in reading and writing.
- The activities teachers plan for pupils are not always well matched to the needs and aptitudes of the pupils, so progress is not rapid and sustained.
- The pace in some lessons is too slow and as a result, pupils lose focus and progress slows.
- In mathematics, pupils do not always have a clear idea about which calculation method to choose in order to solve a problem. Pupils sometimes spend too much time using inappropriate methods and progress slows.
- The marking of pupils' work is not consistent across the school. Consequently, pupils do not take an active role in improving their own work.
- Although teaching and pupils' achievement are improving, leaders' actions have not yet had a full impact.
- Plans for improvement do not always show clearly what result they are aimed at, and how leaders will check they are working. As a result improvements cannot be so easily fine-tuned while they are happening.

The school has the following strengths:

- Pupils enjoy school, feel safe, behave well and are courteous. Relationships between adults and pupils are good.
- Staff work well together with a clear sense of purpose. Morale is high because staff have faith in, and respect for, the new leadership team.
- Engagement with parents and carers is strong because school leaders have made concerted attempts to create new channels of communication.
- Senior leaders and the governing body have recognised where the school needs to improve and have begun to take firm and decisive action. Consequently, attainment is rising and pupils currently in the school are making better progress than in the past.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons taught by 15 teachers of which four were joint observations with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or the director of progress.
- Inspectors took account of the 15 responses to the staff questionnaire, the three letters and two emails received from parents and carers, together with the 90 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including information about how well pupils make progress, self-evaluation, school development and improvement documentation, documentation regarding the management of teachers' performance, minutes of governing body meetings, and school policies and records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance. They viewed the school website.
- They listened to pupils reading.
- The inspectors held meetings with two groups of pupils, two members of the governing body, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and director of progress the leaders of literacy and mathematics and the special educational needs coordinator. A further meeting was held with a representative of the local authority to discuss the nature and impact of the support provided for the school.

Inspection team

Jill Thewlis, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mary Jane Edwards	Additional Inspector
Peter Thrussell	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's is a larger than average primary school. The school roll is rising.
- There are two classes per year group, including in the Reception classes, and all pupils are taught in single-age classes.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds.
- Below-average proportions of pupils are supported at school action as well as at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or from armed forces families, is below average.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has undertaken a restructuring exercise and, as a result, there is a new leadership team in place under the existing headteacher.
- The governing body has been reconstituted and is now reduced in size.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - improving the pace of teaching and learning in lessons
 - ensuring that the activities are well matched to the needs of all learners by providing the right level of challenge.
- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate progress in mathematics by ensuring:
 - the new calculation policy is used consistently across the school
 - marking is consistently used across the school to enable pupils to understand the next steps in their learning and take an active role in improving their work.
- Ensure that leaders and managers make clear in school improvement plans how performance will be measured and checked.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils have not made rapid enough progress in mathematics; teaching has not been consistently good enough. The school has recognised this and made mathematics a focus for improvement but the impact of this work is yet to be fully reflected in pupils' accelerated progress or end of key stage attainment.
- Since the last inspection and leadership restructure, a new calculation policy has been introduced because the school has recognised that there should be a consistency of approach as pupils move from year to year. However, this policy is not yet consistently applied across the school. As a result, pupils are not always clear about which method or strategy they should apply to a particular problem. This means that in some classes, progress is slow because pupils lack understanding; pupils are not yet making rapid and sustained progress in mathematics, although there have been some improvements in their learning.
- Children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities broadly in line with those expected for their age. In the past, their progress has required improvement, but current assessments and observation of lessons indicate that progress this year is better, due to good teaching. Progress is good in English in Key Stage 1 and requires improvement in mathematics. From their average starting points, children leave Key Stage 1 with above average attainment in reading and writing and average attainment in mathematics.
- Pupils are able to use their knowledge of phonics (links between sounds and letters) to read simple words. In the phonic screening check in Year 1, pupils' scores were broadly in line with the national average. Currently many pupils are reading at above the level expected for their age. Progress in English, in the current academic year, is good throughout the school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported through a range of intervention programmes, but like their classmates progress is variable and overall requires improvement.
- The school has taken steps to ensure that the very few pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding are supported in both their academic and personal needs. The very small numbers mean statistics are not necessarily representative, but pupils in this group who were Year 6 in 2012 made good progress and reached standards that were about a term ahead of their classmates in English and five terms in mathematics. The progress of eligible pupils who are currently in the school is variable and overall in line with other pupils.
- There is no difference in the progress of pupils of different ethnic backgrounds.
- The progress of some pupils is impeded because marking is not consistent in all classes and pupils do not have a clear idea about how to improve their work nor do they fully understand their next steps in learning. This is particularly the case in mathematics. Where marking is used effectively, most notably in Year 5 and Year 6, pupils are now making faster progress. This is not the case in other year groups where marking is not so well established.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good across the school. The teaching of mathematics has been less effective than in reading and writing and as a result, the attainment and progress of pupils in mathematics has been significantly slower.
- In some lessons, the pace of teaching is too slow and so pupils sometimes become disinterested. For example pupils are sometimes kept sitting listening too long when they are ready to move on to doing more active work. On other occasions, pupils are given tasks to complete that are not developing understanding. For example, in one lesson, pupils had to spend a disproportionate amount of time cutting and sticking which did nothing to enhance learning.
- Work is not always well matched to the needs and abilities of pupils. Sometimes all are asked to

start on the same work, which is too easy for the most able and can be too difficult for the least able. As a result, pupils are not able to make rapid progress.

- Pupils benefit from good teaching in the Reception and Year 1 classes and as a result make good progress. The pace at which pupils in Years 2 and 3 are learning is slower than it is for the older and the younger pupils.
- There is outstanding teaching in Years 5 and 6 and good teaching in Year 4. Consequently, pupils in these year groups are making good and sometimes outstanding progress, seen in lessons and in pupils' books.
- In the best lessons, the activities are well matched to the needs of learners; assessment is used and discussed, by both the teacher and the pupils, to move learning forward and attitudes to learning are excellent because pupils are challenged appropriately.
- Reading is taught well. Pupils enjoy reading and even some very young pupils are able to deduce the meanings of words from the text and discuss ideas sensibly and intelligently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is generally good both in lessons and around the school. Where teaching is not good, pupils become disinterested. This is why behaviour is not outstanding.
- Pupils, staff, parents and carers are generally positive about behaviour in the school. Pupils say that the good behaviour seen during the inspection is typical.
- The school successfully makes sure everyone is included and ensures that there is no discrimination. Pupils from different backgrounds play together happily and support each other well in lessons. They are courteous to each other and to the adults in the school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe. They say they feel safe in the school and are very clear that any incidents of poor behaviour will be promptly dealt with by the staff. They are aware of the different forms of bullying, including name calling and internet bullying, but say it is not a problem in this school.
- Pupils are keen to talk about their work and enjoy learning. They are happy to give opinions. For example, they say if they could make an improvement to the school, it would be to have a flatter playing field to make playing sport and games easier. Where pupils are given responsibility, they perform their duties sensibly. They are proud of their school.
- Attendance is above average and monitored rigorously. To ensure this, governors and senior leaders have been proactive in their work with parents and carers, emphasising the link between good attendance, high attainment and good progress.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management are not yet good because improvements made have not yet fed through to have a full impact. Teaching is not yet consistently good or better and pupils do not make rapid enough progress in mathematics.
- One reason that teaching and mathematics have not yet improved enough is that school improvement plans do not yet have precise measures of success by which progress can be monitored. As a result, monitoring of these plans sometimes lacks a clear focus, which means that ways of speeding up improvement are not always fine-tuned.
- Leaders have demonstrated that they have the capacity to raise pupils' progress rates. For example, progress has risen in the Reception Year and in Years 5 and 6. Leaders have established a much-improved method of tracking pupils' progress, which enables them to quickly identify and take action where progress is weak. As a result they can show improvements to the progress of individual pupils.
- Improvements have also been made to the monitoring of teaching and learning within the school. The school can demonstrate improvements to the performance of individual teachers even though overall teaching is not yet good. Performance management arrangements have

been strengthened. Teachers have targets to ensure that any increased pay or promotion is closely linked to strong classroom practice.

- The headteacher has recently restructured the school and there is now a new senior leadership team in place. The headteacher and senior leaders are buoyant and now have a clearer sense of purpose and direction. The local authority has provided proportionate support in helping the school to secure better teaching.
- The promotion of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is good. There is a strong sense of caring for others within the school. Pupils are encouraged to undertake charitable fund raising, for example, 'Walk for Water'.
- The school complies with all safeguarding requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - A process of self-review and a reconstitution of the governing body have resulted in a greater capacity to hold the school to account, through a sharpened view of performance. Governors have a clear knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. School leaders ensure that they are aware of the progress and attainment of all groups of pupils within the school and recent, effective training has enabled the governing body to ask challenging questions. Governors understand how the school compares with other schools nationally. Financial resources are well managed and have enabled a restructuring of the leadership team, which has increased the capacity of the school to drive forward improvements. Governors are very clear about the link between performance management and salary progression. They understand the purpose of pupil premium and know how and why the money has been spent. Governors have ensured that safeguarding complies with requirements.

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	118759
Local authority	Kent County Council
Inspection number	405815

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Sandey
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Leaman
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 May 2013
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