

St Mary's CofE (A) Primary School

Mucklestone, Market Drayton, TF9 4DN

Inspection dates 13–14 June 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- While pupils' progress and attainment are now rising, achievement over time has been – and to some degree still remains – too variable.
- Attainment and progress in mathematics across the school are of more uneven quality than that seen in reading and writing.
- Though teaching is steadily improving, lessons do not always take account of pupils' differing learning needs and the work set is not always challenging enough, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils are not given enough time to use their own initiative, develop simple strategies to check the accuracy of their work or to become independent learners.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in open-ended, problem-solving activities.
- Sometimes adults talk for too long and their questioning does not provide opportunities for pupils to think for themselves.
- Methods to set targets to guide and boost pupils' learning are not consistently effective, especially in mathematics.
- Adults do not always check on learning in lessons and miss opportunities to adjust activities to accelerate progress.
- The quality of presentation in pupils' books is not always high enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has transformed many aspects of the school's work to eliminate a legacy of considerable turbulence in the school's life.
- The headteacher and governing body have now placed the school on a clear and focused course for the future. Consequently, teaching and pupils' achievement have improved.
- The teaching of reading is a strength.
- Pupils behave well, are keen learners and are all known as individuals. Their attendance is above average.
- Good links across subjects ensure that learning is interesting and well structured.
- The school is well placed to improve further.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 12 lessons or parts of lessons. All classroom teachers present during the inspection were observed teaching at least three times. The inspectors undertook one joint lesson observation with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, staff, members of the governing body and groups of pupils.
- The inspector heard pupils read and discussed with them their reading preferences and personal reading record.
- The inspector sampled pupils' work, scrutinised the school's tracking records of pupils' progress and took account of the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- The inspector held a discussion with a member of the local authority's advisory staff.
- The views of parents and carers were sought during the two days and 17 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were examined.
- The views of staff were sought through a questionnaire. In total, four questionnaires were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Gordon Ewing, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- Below-average proportions of pupils are from minority ethnic groups.
- The school currently receives the pupil premium for a below average proportion of pupils. This is additional funding for pupils in local authority care, pupils with a parent in the armed services and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is well below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been seven headteachers in six years. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2011.
- The school is organised into two classes; class 1 is children in Reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2; class 2 is pupils from Years 3 to 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Take further steps to ensure that all teaching is consistently good or better, by:
 - making sure that all staff know how to challenge pupils to achieve what they can
 - sharing and modelling existing good practice in teaching and learning
 - improving teachers' questioning so that pupils are encouraged to think carefully and have the time to consider their answers
 - providing guidance to all staff to increase their ability to check on learning during lessons in order to adjust activities to accelerate progress
 - making sure that teachers' marking gives prompt and constructive guidance to pupils on how to take their next step in learning and increase their independence as learners
 - allowing pupils to make more decisions in their learning and exercise more initiative in planning their next steps
 - making sure that activities are planned to challenge the abilities of all pupils and, especially, the more able.
 - improving standards of presentation in pupils' work by setting higher expectations and sharing examples of best work.
- Improve levels of attainment and progress in mathematics so pupils' achievement is accelerated, by:
 - developing a consistent approach to target setting so that pupils have individualised targets in mathematics that help them to move to the next level with confidence
 - providing pupils with open-ended problems and tasks that allow them to use and apply their mathematical skills effectively
 - making sure that pupils are taught how to check the accuracy of their calculations in mathematics using alternative methods.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities similar to those typical for their age. Over time, they make broadly expected progress so, that by the end of Year 6, they move to secondary education with broadly average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The close involvement of parents and carers in their children's learning, especially in class 1 is having a positive impact on developing pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy outside of the classroom. The 'Home Learning' books boost pupils' progress by engaging and motivating them in learning activities that build on the basic skills being developed in the classroom.
- Recent improvements in the quality of teaching, including raising teachers' expectations, have brought about better rates of progress for current pupils, especially in reading and writing. Attainment and progress in mathematics are improving, but learning is less successful across the school because target setting in mathematics is not sufficiently precise and the challenge in lessons, especially for the more able, is not always high enough.
- Pupils make good progress in their reading because the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) is consistently good. Year 1 pupils, for example, showed good levels of concentration and perseverance in tackling new words such as 'whistles', 'kidnappers' and 'mountain.' The proportion of Year 1 pupils in 2012 who reached the national average in the phonics screening check was above average.
- In 2012, there were too few Year 6 pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding to be able to comment on their attainment and progress in English and mathematics. The school's most recent data show that those pupils currently receiving this additional funding do as well as others in the school and there are no significant gaps in their attainment when compared to that of other pupils. The funding is used to increase these pupils' access to the broad range of subjects and out-of-school activities on offer, as well as in one-to-one additional support for literacy and numeracy.
- The relatively small proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is supported effectively so that these pupils achieve as well as their classmates.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is rising as teachers respond to the higher expectations set by the headteacher. However, too many lessons still have aspects that require improvement for teaching to be judged good overall.
- Teachers and other adults know pupils well so that learning activities maintain interest regardless of the broad age-and-ability ranges in the two classes. This personalised focus ensures that relationships are good and learning is purposeful. However, on too many occasions adults do not use questioning with enough care or challenge and do not give pupils time to consider their answers or to reflect on their learning.
- Each lesson starts with sharing the learning objective so that pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers successfully prepare different tasks for pupils who are working at different levels but these are not always tightly matched to ability. As a result, opportunities are missed to accelerate learning and to allow pupils to work independently or to use their initiative.

- Adults do not keep a close enough eye on learning during lessons in order to check that activities are challenging enough or to correct misunderstandings. This reduces opportunities to accelerate learning.
- In mathematics, pupils work diligently on the tasks set but do not always check the accuracy of their calculations using another method. Consequently, avoidable errors are not corrected and misunderstandings are reinforced. Furthermore, pupils are not exposed to enough opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to open-ended problems and, thus, their higher-order thinking and organisational skills are underdeveloped. As a result, more able pupils, in particular, are not challenged as much as they could be.
- The setting of targets to guide pupils in taking the next step and in setting new challenges is too variable across the school. Targets in writing are generally set and checked regularly and, as a result, pupils' learning is accelerated. This is not the case in mathematics, where the majority of pupils are not set demanding personalised targets that move their mathematical learning forward. This restricts pupils' abilities to check on their own learning and to develop independent learning skills.
- Teachers' marking while punctual and positive does not always give pupils pointers to help them move on and additional tasks set are often repeating rather than extending skills. When good advice and guidance is given, they are not always followed up in subsequent work. Pupils are also not given enough opportunity to respond to their teacher's feedback or to assess the quality of their own work or that of their peers.
- The quality of presentation in pupils' books, including their handwriting, their calculation methods in mathematics and their recording skills, is too variable across the school. In this respect, teachers' expectations are not high enough and untidy work is not challenged or eliminated with enough rigour.
- Some teaching is good. In a successful lesson developing discussion and philosophical skills, pupils shared their ideas on 'superstitions'. They were encouraged to think about why superstitions have developed and to judge those that were less plausible. Throughout the debate pupils across the age range listened to each other's ideas carefully, were very democratic in allowing everyone to have their say and in debating the pros and cons of a particular point of view. The teacher used judicious questioning to maintain focus and pace so that behaviour was exemplary.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well, are enthusiastic learners and want to do well in lessons. Pupils say that they really enjoy school and feel safe. In conversation, they were adamant that bullying does not happen and could talk confidently about e-safety and how they had run 'anti-bullying' workshops for other pupils. One pupil commented that, 'It is a friendly school where everyone works together.'
- Parents are right to be very positive about their children's behaviour and safety. One parent reported that she was very happy with the school and highlighted how her child had transferred within year and had settled in very well as a result of the good induction procedures and warm welcome from pupils.

- Adults manage all pupils' behaviour well. Those pupils who occasionally display uncooperative behaviour are treated with sensitivity and patience. Staff can confidently point to individuals who have made great strides in their learning, both academically and personally, since joining the school.
- Attendance is currently above average. This reflects pupils' enjoyment of school and the strong partnership between home and school.

The leadership and management are good

- After a period of significant turbulence the headteacher has carefully nurtured a new sense of purpose and direction to the school. She is well supported by a small and dedicated team of staff and a governing body that works hard to support and challenge the leadership.
- With an increased focus on the individualised tracking of pupils' learning, teachers are held more closely to account for progress and the small team of staff meets regularly to ensure that no pupil is left behind. Consequently, teaching is improving, though there is still more to do in increasing its consistently better quality and ensuring teachers challenge all abilities and develop pupils' independence. Teachers are beginning to share good practice, but this has not yet gone far enough to have the impact intended on the quality of teaching and learning. There is also insufficient guidance provided to enable all adults to ensure that learning in lessons is more closely monitored.
- Pupils are confident that their views are valued and that staff are there to keep them safe and guide them. One pupil described the headteacher as, 'really enthusiastic and someone who loves children'. Pupils report that they are all treated as equals and that any form of discrimination is not tolerated.
- Staff views expressed in the questionnaires and in discussions with the inspector show that morale is high and that the whole team share in the ambitious vision of the headteacher. One commented, 'There is greater direction and leadership, clear expectations and good discipline.'
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. With the effective support of the local authority, leaders have clear and realistic plans in place to drive further improvement.
- The range of subjects taught and the quality of learning activities beyond the timetable on offer to all pupils is a strength of this small school. Structured plans, following a three-year or four-year cycle, are in place to ensure that pupils' learning experiences are comprehensive and vibrant. As a result, through all of the school's work, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the school and feel very much partners with the school in their children's development. All 17 parents and carers who completed the online Parent View survey said that they would recommend this school to other parents.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a confident understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' subsequent achievement. They know each pupil individually and have a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are well organised and seek evidence on the work of the school with increasing precision and challenge. They monitor pupils' progress alongside the headteacher and contribute to the collective drive to raise pupils' attainment and levels of

achievement. Governors use clear procedures to manage the performance of staff and ensure that responsibility and salary progression are awarded solely on merit. They understand how well the pupil premium funds are allocated and have a clear picture of its impact on the outcomes for those targeted pupils. They attend training regularly to keep up with changes to their responsibilities. They ensure that all safeguarding policies and procedures meet national 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	124342
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	402254

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	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally-Ann Shotton
Headteacher	Jane Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2009
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