

St Marie's School

Fulwood Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S10 3DQ

Inspection dates 12–13 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well in their work, especially in mathematics.
- Standards are above national averages with an increasing number of pupils reaching the higher levels in their work.
- The quality of teaching is good overall. Teamwork amongst the staff is strong and they work well together.
- The headteacher provides quietly determined and effective leadership. Senior leaders and governors have taken successful action to improve teaching and raise standards.
- The leadership accurately recognises what works well and correctly identifies areas for development.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is consistently good. Most have positive attitudes to their work and are caring and sensible young people for their age.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe.
- Parents and carers are very happy with the quality of education and care provided for their children.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is sometimes variable. Occasionally tasks are not sufficiently challenging and time is not used well enough to ensure pupils complete their work in depth and detail.
- Leaders have diagnosed that checks made on the work of the school are not always rigorous enough in identifying where improvement can still be made.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 16 lessons in the eight classes in school. Several of these were joint lesson observations with the headteacher. Inspectors also listened to individual pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the special educational needs co-ordinator and the Early Years Foundation Stage staff. Discussions took place with groups of pupils and representatives of the governing body. A discussion also took place with a representative of the Umbrella Trust (the 'collaborative partner' schools).
- Inspectors took account of the views of 55 parents and carers from the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke to several at the start of the school day. Inspectors also reviewed 15 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including recent data on pupil progress, planning and monitoring information, and minutes of meetings of the governing body. They also considered records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Sue Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Keith Massett

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below the national average. Currently this provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and a very small number in care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs identified at school action is slightly below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Approximately 35% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups which is slightly more than seen in most schools. About 10% of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- St Marie's converted to become a Catholic Voluntary Academy and a member of the Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Umbrella Trust of three Sheffield Catholic Voluntary Academies in October 2012. When its predecessor school, St Marie's Catholic Primary School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory overall.
- The school's catchment area is very wide, admitting pupils from five Catholic parishes across the city of Sheffield.
- 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?

- Ensure that teaching across the school is consistently good and increasing the proportion that is outstanding by:
 - making sure that time is used well in lessons and explanations are clear enough in order that pupils have sufficient opportunities to complete good quality work
 - checking that groups of pupils of different abilities are clearly identified in planning and that tasks consistently challenge those of all abilities, particularly the higher attainers.
- Improve the leadership's monitoring of the school's work by:
 - ensuring that leaders and managers check precisely and rigorously the impact of staff training and professional development initiatives on accelerating the progress of all pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter Reception with a wide range of skills and experiences. School records indicate these skills are usually in line with the expectations for their age. Many very quickly become confident young learners who are secure in what they know, understand and can do.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make consistently good progress, and this was observed in an interesting and engaging range of activities. For example, the children extended their understanding of numbers when counting the segments and legs on their picture of a caterpillar. They also animatedly discussed what they had found in their hunt for mini-beats in the adjoining wooded area and identified where the creatures liked to live.
- Across the school standards are above the national average and continuing to improve. Overall progress is good and pupils achieve well. Progress in mathematics is particularly strong.
- The school has developed a good system of regularly collecting information about the progress pupils make. Where teaching is most effective, this information is used well to ensure a high level of challenge for groups of different abilities. For example, pupils in Year 5 made excellent progress in mathematics when working out how to record data from their recent sports day. Pupils used what they already knew about different charts and graphs to solve problems using the most efficient methods.
- Pupils of all ages have good speaking and listening skills. Most speak confidently and with grammatical accuracy. Pupils' reading is also good. Many read fluently and with evident enjoyment of books. Younger pupils make rapid progress in learning about letters and the sounds they make.
- Data indicate that recently achievement in writing has been relatively weaker than that in other areas. This has been addressed well and the school is monitoring the progress made by pupils following an initiative to improve reading and writing. The school carefully checks any minor differences between the achievement of boys and girls to ensure there are no significant trends developing.
- The small number of pupils who are new to speaking English as an additional language, and those who are bilingual, achieve well. Several do very well and outperform other groups of pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress and often do better than similar pupils nationally. This is because their individual needs are identified and carefully targeted support is provided. This was seen, for example, when staff worked with small groups of pupils to help them produce ideas for a play script using computers away from the distractions of other pupils.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to support pupils, particularly through the work of the learning mentor and the special educational needs co-ordinator. Funds are also used to provide access to the homework club and to some out-of-school clubs and activities. Data indicate that recently these pupils did slightly better than similar pupils nationally, but not as well as other groups in school. Funding is now used for more specifically focused activities and the gap is narrowing more rapidly.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good overall, although that observed during the inspection was sometimes variable. Currently it is strongest for the youngest children and for the older pupils. In the lessons observed the strongest teaching was usually in mathematics. The school's own tracking data and a sample of recent work confirm that over time teaching across the subjects is good.
- There are some examples of outstanding teaching, where staff have very high expectations of the pupils and organise activities to ensure that all groups make equally strong progress. For example, Year 3 pupils made excellent progress in activities solving problems, when choosing

the best methods to employ. Staff used the interactive whiteboard effectively so that pupils could demonstrate to others how they would solve the problems. This, together with good pace and interesting activities, motivated pupils to try hard with their work.

- Teaching is consistently good in the Early Years Foundation Stage because there is a well-planned balance of teacher-led and child-chosen activities. Children particularly benefit from learning activities outdoors although sometimes this is limited by the lack of soft surfaces to ensure safe active play.
- Teachers have good working relationships with their pupils. They use praise well which raises pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Where teaching is less effective, this is because time is not always used well and explanations are not clear enough to ensure pupils are able to complete good quality, detailed work. Very occasionally activities are noisy and this affects some pupils' concentration.
- In most lessons the level of challenge provided for different groups of pupils is good. Staff usually make good use of assessment information to provide work that is well-matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities. In lessons where teaching requires some improvement, the level of challenge is not as good. For example, when younger pupils identified links between numbers from one to ten, it was clear that many higher attainers could do this quite easily.
- Support staff, including the learning mentor, work in partnership with teachers to help groups and individuals, particularly disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They also support the small number who are new to learning English and pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. This ensures that there is a good focus on identifying and meeting pupils' individual needs.
- School leaders place a strong emphasis on improving teaching. Recent staff training activities have focused upon recognising the features of effective teaching. Staff benefit from working with colleagues in school and across the trust to develop good practice, although the impact of this is not strong in a few classes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in and around the school in a variety of activities. Many say they like their teachers and think this is a happy and friendly place to be. Several parents and carers mentioned how happy their children are here and how much they look forward to coming to school.
- Many pupils have a mature approach to school and recognise they get on well with others. They say that they feel safe in school because this is a caring place where everyone is valued. They can explain what bullying is and the types of this that might occur. They understand what cyber-bullying is. They think there is no racism in school and that all pupils get on well together.
- Pupils are proud of their school and are pleased that their good behaviour and efforts are rewarded. They know there is a clear system of sanctions should they misbehave.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are valued, as are the small number who are new to learning English. These pupils are well supported by other pupils and staff.
- While behaviour is good overall and has some very strong features, it is not outstanding because pupils' attitudes to learning are sometimes variable. At times some pupils do not play a very active part in their own learning. Several do not offer ideas to discussions, are passive in their approach and do not try hard with their work. Occasionally, for example, pupil's work is untidily produced and limited in quantity and quality.
- Attendance is above the national average. The school does much to encourage good attendance and punctuality and to discourage holidays taken in term time.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides quietly determined and successful leadership. He has ensured the school maintains its long-standing strengths in caring for the pupils, coupled with an increasingly effective focus on improving teaching.
- The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher and staff team. There is a strong sense of a community in the school with everyone working towards a common goal of further improvement. Staff holding specific responsibilities for subjects and areas, including special educational needs and the Early Years Foundation Stage, work well to ensure effective provision.
- The school works closely with its partner schools in the Umbrella Trust. Such work has ensured that there is a strong focus on improving teaching. This is having a positive impact in most but not all areas. The school also works with other external groups, including the local authority moderators for the Early Years Foundation Stage. This ensures an on-going focus on continuing improvement.
- Teachers' performance is checked regularly and senior staff use information from lesson observations and data about pupil progress to decide whether teachers should be paid more.
- The school has a highly accurate view of its strengths and areas for further improvement. There are suitable opportunities for staff to be involved in staff training and professional development activities, although the effect of these has sometimes been mixed. Senior staff monitor the impact of all initiatives and recognise the need to check this even more carefully, to ensure they have a beneficial effect on improving the rate of pupils' progress.
- Pupil premium funding is used increasingly effectively to provide additional staff to support pupils, along with a range of extra activities. The school collects a good range of assessment information about the rate of progress made by individuals and groups of pupils. This is used well to identify if any groups of pupils are underperforming and to provide additional help. This includes support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- The school provides the pupils with a strong moral code, where everyone is welcomed, cared for and valued. With a wide cultural mix in school, there are plenty of opportunities to learn about other societies. A particular strength is the range of opportunities for pupils to work together including when solving problems. This helps them to develop their social skills.
- Procedures to safeguard pupils meet government requirements. Staff ensure pupils have equal access to activities and are provided with an interesting range of tasks that bring learning to life. For example, pupils speak with pleasure about residential visits and the experiences they have had visiting other places of educational interest. The school very actively fosters good relationships and tackles discrimination. Overall, with the many good improvements made recently, the school shows that it has the capacity to continue to improve.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is firmly committed to and supportive of what is provided for the pupils. Governors accurately recognise the many strengths in provision and the quality of teaching. The school is very fortunate to have governors who have high aspirations for the school. Several have links with local institutions including the university, and contacts are used well to provide additional activities, such as work in science, that motivate the pupils to do well. Governors know what the data tells them about pupil progress. Minutes of recent meetings show that governors are active in challenging school leaders about the decisions made, including expenditure. There is a well-developed structure of committee meetings which are carefully focused on school improvement. Governors work with those in the Umbrella Trust to ensure they meet the responsibilities placed upon them. They support the headteacher well in managing teachers' performance and pay-related issues, so that staff are rewarded in line with how well pupils achieve. Governors are now actively considering how they can extend their involvement through focused visits to consider specific areas and how they can ensure that they are not dependent on the headteacher for information.

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	138848
Local authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	409849

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Baycroft
Headteacher	Alan Dewhurst
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0114 230 1904
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