

St Mary's CofE Primary School

Lansdown View, Timsbury, Bath, BA2 0JR

Inspection dates 13–14 June 2013

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | 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 make slower progress than they should, particularly in mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is uneven across the school. There is not enough good or better teaching to ensure that pupils' learning is always good and to compensate for any past underperformance.
- The work teachers plan is not always set at the right level of difficulty to challenge all pupils.
- Leadership of some subject areas is not strong enough. In other subject areas leaders are new to the role although developing strongly.
- Teachers mark pupils' books often but the way that this is done is not consistent across the school and does not always help the pupils to move on in their learning.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is not always strong enough, particularly in mathematics.

The school has the following strengths:

- The recently appointed headteacher and deputy have very high aspirations for the school and have already introduced many necessary changes to improve teaching and assessment. They have a very accurate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Pupils behave well. The school aims to include all pupils in everything it offers and the care shown by staff means that individual needs are well taken care of.
- Governors know the school well and have strengthened their ability to challenge the school to improve its performance.
- The school has improved its system for tracking the progress of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes except Year 6 who were on a camp. They observed 11 lessons, of which four were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders, staff, governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Informal discussions were held with parents and carers at the start and end of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of 34 responses to the online Parent View survey and 16 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's plan for improvement, information on individual pupils' progress, records on behaviour and safety, teachers' plans, pupils' books and the minutes of the governing body's meetings.
- They heard a sample of pupils read from Year 2 and Year 5.
- Inspectors observed behaviour on the playground, around the school, in classrooms and in two whole-school assemblies.

Inspection team

Tom Morrison, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patricia Dodds

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is a slightly smaller than the average sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding, which is additional funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who receive extra help with their learning (school action) is above average. The proportion who need a greater level of support (school action plus) or who have a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are recent internal promotions (February and May 2013), having been acting leaders from September 2012.
- There is a separately run pre-school on the site which was not inspected at this time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that marking is carried out consistently, and that pupils have the opportunity to respond to this feedback so that they are better informed about the next steps in their learning
 - matching work more closely to the abilities of pupils so that it is at the right level of difficulty and all make good progress
 - improving teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics so that concepts are clearly introduced and misconceptions are addressed.
- Accelerate the progress pupils make across the school by:
 - continuing and enhancing the work the school has started on ensuring consistency in pupil assessment throughout Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2
 - increasing the aspiration that teachers have for lower and higher ability pupils so that the work set provides challenge and extends learning.
- Improve subject leadership, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - reviewing roles so that teachers' responsibilities, performance and levels of pay are more closely matched
 - extending the opportunities for all subject leaders to learn from best practice so that they all take an active part in leading improvement across the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because progress is not yet consistently good for all subjects across the school. Although current school assessments show improvements in progress in some year groups this has not happened quickly or consistently enough. It is likely that this year the proportion of pupils making typically expected progress in mathematics in Year 6 will be lower than the national figure.
- When they enter the school pupils have similar abilities to pupils nationally but standards by the end of Key Stage 1 are slightly below national averages and at Key Stage 2 are in line. Key Stage 2 attainment in mathematics for 2013 is likely to be well below the national average.
- Additional government funds through the pupil premium, are being used well to help specific groups of pupils so that their progress is better than that of their peers. Spending has been targeted on meeting the needs of individuals or small groups, by providing additional one-to-one support and purchasing additional resources. The school's information on pupils' achievement shows that these pupils are making better progress than other pupils. In 2012 attainment levels for those eligible for pupil premium funding, including those eligible for free school meals, are higher than those of other pupils in the school in English and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have recently started to make better progress compared to last year. Provision has been improved and individual help is much more focused. Learning in lessons is sometimes slower if the teaching is not well matched to pupils' needs. School assessments show a variable picture for the progress of these pupils in different subjects and year groups.
- Pupils enter Reception with similar abilities to those expected for their age in most areas although they tend to be lower in communication skills and higher in attitudes to learning. They make good progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage because provision takes account of identified strengths and weaknesses. However, the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is occasionally not as strong as it should be to provide a firm foundation for pupils to develop their reading skills in Key Stage 1.
- Progress in reading has accelerated for some year groups but where it has not it is because teaching is not well matched to the pupils' individual needs. The school has purchased additional resources and trained staff to address this issue but it is too early to see the impact of this on pupils' achievement in reading.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching across the school is not consistently good enough. Inspectors observed lessons where there was good and better learning. They also observed lessons where pupils' progress was too slow. These observations confirm the senior leaders' knowledge of the current quality of teaching across classes and subjects.
- New initiatives for teaching writing and reading are not yet embedded and are only just starting to have an impact on teaching and learning, and therefore on progress. From listening to pupils read inspectors could see pupils applying their phonics skills to read new words. The pupils reported that they often read at home and in school, although they were not always aware of how their teachers had checked their reading progress.
- The quality of marking and feedback to pupils is inconsistent across year groups and subjects, although better in literacy than in mathematics. Although most books are marked regularly this does not often support learning and increase progress. Pupils do not routinely have opportunities to respond to teachers' comments.
- Inspectors saw some good examples of pupils assessing their own work and that of their classmates, and this helped them to understand what was required of them. The school has been focusing on techniques to quickly assess pupils' understanding during the lesson and

inspectors saw very good examples of this. However, neither of these strategies is used well by all teachers.

- The pupils are very proud of their learning logs which allow them to respond to 'home challenges' by following up topic work in areas of their own particular interest. This is coupled with regular spelling and times tables practise at home. One pupil remarked that they wished the school was 'a secondary school and a university so that I don't have to leave'.
- Teaching is not yet consistently based on teachers' accurate and detailed assessment of pupils' abilities, and activities do not always enable pupils to make good progress. Teachers' expectations of pupils, particularly the lower and higher ability pupils, are not generally high enough and so pupils are not always set work at the right level of difficulty to enable them to make accelerated progress.
- Teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics, is not always strong enough. As a result, in some lessons pupils do not develop an accurate understanding of mathematical ideas, which can lead to them making errors and hamper future progress.
- Where teaching is good, teaching assistants have been involved in the planning and are able to adapt tasks to develop learning where this is necessary. In these lessons inspectors observed skilful questioning by the teachers and a good match of activities to pupils' abilities. In one particularly effective lesson pupils were asked to examine common errors in column addition to help them have a better understanding of the technique and to avoid such pitfalls in their own work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They enjoy school and are eager and able to explain their learning. They feel safe; one pupil commented, 'I wish this school was half house, half school so I could stay here all the time.'
- In a few lessons where teaching was less than good pupils were more restless and off task. There are not always enough opportunities for pupils to demonstrate exemplary attitudes to their work through finding things out for themselves.
- Pupils are respectful of each other and of staff. They work well cooperatively and independently. The behaviour policy is clear and used consistently, pupils know it well and inspectors noted only a very few instances of behaviour that was not good. Pupils report that bullying hardly ever occurs and that any instances of poor behaviour are quickly and effectively dealt with.
- The buildings and playgrounds are safe and well supervised at all times. Pupils play well together and are supported in learning to take turns or respect each other's views where they do not do so naturally.
- Pupils are excited about their chance to influence school life through the 'Learning to Lead' teams. This fosters their ability to work in teams and develops their independence.
- Pupils readily engage in programmes such as 'Just different - learning about disability and difference' and wheelchair basketball and the school organises specific activities to enhance pupils' understanding of other cultures and circumstances. These contribute effectively to the school's work on tackling discrimination and promoting good relationships.
- Attendance and punctuality are good. The school has effective procedures for dealing with any attendance issues. Any incidents, or concerns from parents or carers, are logged and actions are followed up carefully.
- Pupils have a good awareness of how to be safe in their everyday lives. The school keeps them well informed about potential hazards, such as on the roads through cycle and pedestrian training, as well as e-safety and life skills.

The leadership and management **require improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because teaching is not yet good and so pupils do not achieve well.
- The quality of subject leadership is too variable. Some leaders are not ensuring that improvements happen in their area of responsibility and the links between responsibilities and salary are not yet close enough. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have introduced several strategies to tackle underperformance in literacy and the slow development of these strategies by some teachers means that progress in reading and writing is not yet good.
- Parents and carers are supportive of the school and the responses from Parent View show that few have concerns. Governors survey parents and carers annually but the school does not systematically collect feedback about new initiatives. The school has, however, built strong relationships with parents and carers who might find working with the school difficult.
- The headteacher and her deputy have a very accurate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, particularly with respect to teaching and achievement, and have quickly taken strong, courageous action to address the issues they identified at the beginning of the year. They have produced a clear plan with ambitious milestones and there are signs that this is having a positive effect on the quality of teaching in some areas of the school. From the actions taken to date, it is clear that the headteacher and deputy headteacher have the capacity and determination to lead further improvement.
- The school has recently changed the system for storing and reporting on pupil assessments and progress. This has led to greater clarity, an increased focus on the progress of groups of pupils and more accessible information for teachers, leaders and governors.
- The local authority has been supporting the school through advice given by consultants and regular visits. It recently conducted a review, the outcomes of which are in accordance with the judgements of this inspection.
- The curriculum is well thought out with a range of activities within topics and good development of literacy skills in other subjects. Pupils benefit from a wide range of visits to places of interest and a good range of clubs and activities as well as specialist sport teaching. Tuition in music and whole-school singing is provided by a teacher who inspires the pupils and enables them to produce a very high standard of performance. These experiences provide well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Safeguarding has high priority and is implemented effectively to meet all requirements. Child protection, safer recruitment and e-safety training for all staff and some governors is completed in line with agreed timescales.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are closely involved in the school and have high aspirations for it. They are well aware of standards with respect to achievement and teaching and have challenged the new senior leaders on this. However, this has not yet resulted in improvements in teaching or achievement.
 - Training sessions for governors have ensured that they are well briefed to carry out their role, particularly with respect to school performance data. They can explain how the pupil premium is used and what the impact is. The school regularly presents data for this group compared to other pupils as well as for other groups of pupils such as those who require additional support.
 - Policies are monitored carefully and are up to date although the school's website does not always reflect this. Governors work well to ensure the school is a safe place and meets safeguarding requirements. Governors have a clear understanding of the new arrangements to manage teachers' performance and how these link to pay progression.

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 | 109208 |
| Local authority | Bath and North East Somerset |
| Inspection number | 412409 |

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 controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 201 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Judith Taylor |
| Headteacher | Miss Alice Brown |
| Date of previous school inspection | 19–20 January 2010 |
| Telephone number | 01761 470425 |
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