

St Mary's CofE (VA) Primary School

Stoney Lane, Kidderminster, DY10 2LX

Inspection dates 4–5 July 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		Requires improvement	3
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 do not make good progress in Years 1 and 2 or in their writing in Years 3 to 6.
- Teaching requires improvement because teachers do not match work accurately to pupils' abilities in Years 1 and 2 or move them on quickly in lessons.
- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not have enough opportunities to write at length and the marking of their writing does not help them to improve.
- Pupils do not concentrate well enough when they find work too difficult or too easy.
- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders, including governors, do not evaluate the school's performance accurately.
- Leaders do not focus on all those areas most in need of improvement. So teaching and achievement in Years 1 and 2, and writing in Years 3 to 6, are not improving quickly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils make good progress in mathematics and reading in Years 3 to 6 because they are taught well.
- Leaders have improved provision in the Nursery and Reception classes, where children make good progress.
- Pupils feel safe at school.
- Leaders have established strong ties with parents, which, together with an excellent 'nurture' base, have led to much improved behaviour and better attendance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, including four that were jointly observed with the school's leaders. In addition, they listened to pupils reading and analysed the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, staff and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 15 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also met parents formally and informally, received letters from them and analysed the results of the school's own questionnaire for parents.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including: the school's own data on pupils' current progress, records relating to behaviour and bullying, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

David Driscoll, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Bucktin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is similar in size to most other primary schools. The number of pupils on roll is rising rapidly and the school is considerably larger than at the time of the previous inspection.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above the national average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, additional funding for looked-after pupils, those known to be eligible for free school meals or those with a parent in the armed forces, is well above the national average.
- Many more pupils join or leave the school throughout the year than is usual.
- There were too few pupils leaving Year 6 in 2012 to compare results with the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher is currently absent from school and the deputy headteacher is the acting headteacher. There has been a large turnover in staffing since the school was last inspected, including new deputy and assistant headteachers who joined in September 2012.
- The school shares its site with a Children's Centre, which is subject to a separate inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching in Years 1 and 2 and accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - matching work more closely to the differing abilities of the pupils
 - assessing pupils' progress more frequently in lessons and moving them on to more difficult tasks when they are ready.
- Improve pupils' progress in writing in Years 3 to 6 by:
 - giving them more opportunities to write at length
 - providing them with better guidance on how to improve their writing
 - correcting errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar in subjects other than English
 - allowing time for pupils to read and act on the advice, especially to correct errors in punctuation and grammar and practice spellings.
- Improve the accuracy of the school leaders' evaluation of the school's performance by:
 - developing a system that collates all the relevant information and makes better use of the data on pupils' progress when judging the effectiveness of teaching
 - using the results of such evaluation to draw up more sharply focused priorities for improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils start Year 1 with well-below average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. They make expected progress, but not good, so standards remain well below average by the end of Year 2. Only around half the pupils reach the expected standard for their age in reading, and fewer than this in writing and mathematics, by the end of Year 2.
- Standards of writing are not improving quickly enough in Years 3 to 6. There is a stark contrast between the work that pupils complete on a computer and that in their books. Both have good content, but without the tools of a word processor to help them, pupils' writing is poorly presented with many errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Children join the school with knowledge and skills that are well below the levels expected nationally. In the past they have made the progress expected of them. However, children now receive teaching that is more focussed on key skills, such as learning numbers and the sounds that letters make, and they make good progress as a result.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6. All pupils made at least the progress expected in 2012 and the proportion exceeding this was well above average
- Progress in reading in Years 3 to 6 has improved this year and is now good. Pupils enjoy the new reading books and are reaping the benefits of daily reading lessons. There has been an increase in the number of volunteers who listen to pupils read, so pupils have their progress checked more frequently than previously.
- There are no differences in the progress of different groups of pupils.
- Pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium made slightly better progress than other pupils in 2012 and left with similar standards in English and mathematics. This was a marked improvement on 2011, when their standards were much lower, despite making better progress. Leaders have made effective and wide-ranging use of the pupil premium, including additional adults, anger management classes and better resources that have improved pupils' attendance, behaviour and standards.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to others, although it varies from class to class according to the quality of support they receive. In some lessons such pupils are asked probing questions that make them think hard, while in others the teaching assistant does too much for them.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teachers do not match work accurately to the abilities of pupils in Years 1 and 2, so pupils often find the work too hard or too easy. For example, pupils in Year 1 who were not secure in their knowledge of numbers were given work on fractions, while others who had grasped the concept of symmetry were colouring in.
- Teachers do not check pupils often enough in Years 1 and 2 to make sure they are working. Some, for example, finish their work and sit talking quietly instead of being given something new to learn.

- Teachers mark pupils' written work frequently in English in Years 3 to 6. However, the comments do not always provide guidance on what needs to be improved. When such comments are provided, pupils are rarely allowed the time to carry them out, so do not improve their writing. Examples include incorrect spellings that are repeated because the pupil does not correct them.
- Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar in subjects other than English are rarely corrected.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are assessed accurately and frequently. Teachers use the results to group children according to their ability and set them appropriately demanding work, resulting in good progress. They are given tasks that interest them, such as learning their letters using the work they have been doing on gardening.
- The teaching of mathematics and reading in Years 3 to 6 is good. In mathematics, teachers ensure that pupils are secure in the basics before quickly moving them on to applying their new understanding. Pupils learnt how to find factors in Year 4, for example, and were soon finding the factors of a wide range of numbers.
- New reading books have enthused pupils in Years 3 to 6. They now look forward to reading lessons. Their progress is checked more frequently and pupils are becoming more confident at working out what unfamiliar words say. Books are invariably well matched to pupils' reading abilities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils do not have good powers of concentration. If the teacher talks too long or if they do not find the lesson interesting their attention wanders and they start to fidget or talk to their friends.
- The number of exclusions is above average and attendance remains low.
- The highly effective actions taken by leaders are improving this situation rapidly. Around one in ten pupils were excluded at the time of the previous inspection. This figure halved in 2012 and has halved again this year. Attendance has improved at a faster rate than the national average.
- Pupils are polite and courteous towards one another around school.
- Pupils enjoy tackling difficult tasks that allow them to apply the skills they have learnt. In these situations, most notably in mathematics in Years 3 to 6, pupils work hard and demonstrate good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils feel very safe and secure in school. They say that bullying does occur, but rarely, because senior leaders always take pupils' concerns seriously and take quick action to prevent disputes escalating.
- The 'nurture' base is an excellent resource with a strong record of modifying pupils' behaviour. Pupils with special educational needs related to behavioural difficulties are taught in a firm, assertive, but very caring environment. They are taught to control their emotions and what to do if they are becoming angry. There is a clear pattern of fewer instances of pupils losing their temper as the year progresses.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders do not have a formal process of self-evaluation. Instead they rely on the school development plan, which only uses a limited number of areas of the school's performance and results in a generous view of the school's overall effectiveness. Senior staff and governors who are new to the school have no way of quickly gaining an overview of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Information about pupils' progress is not used to target checks on teaching to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses. This leads to a variation in the rate of improvement across the school as not all weaknesses are identified with enough precision.
- Checks on teaching accurately identify strengths and weaknesses for individual teachers. However, these are not used consistently to inform priorities for school improvement. Patterns in the quality of teaching are not always identified, such as those in teaching in Years 1 and 2, so teaching does not improve consistently.
- Where areas are identified for improvement, such as in reading in Years 3 to 6, reducing exclusions and raising attendance, leaders can demonstrate success in moving the school forward.
- Leaders apply the national Teachers' Standards rigorously when deciding on which staff are eligible for promotion. Teachers new to the school have been supported well and have shown clear improvements in their quality of teaching.
- The local authority adviser visited the school regularly to provide good support during the changes in leadership and an overview of the school. However, its evaluation of the school as good, when pupils do not make consistently good progress, is over generous.
- Leaders go to good lengths to promote equality and tackle discrimination. They have used the pupil premium effectively to boost the performance of eligible pupils. A good deal of teaching incorporates elements of a moral, cultural and social nature so pupils come to understand the differences that make individuals special. There have been no racist incidents at the school since the previous inspection and discriminatory language is exceptionally rare.
- Parents speak with passion of the way they are welcomed into school and how staff have helped them to help their children at home. The school is especially effective at engaging those parents who might otherwise be hard to reach, resulting in improved attendance, behaviour and progress for their children.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good overview of the school. They ask searching questions of the headteacher when discussing data on pupils' progress, but do not take account of the full range of data available to them to gain a complete picture of achievement and the quality of teaching.
 - Governors are extremely well informed about the management of teachers' performance and how good teaching is rewarded. They keep a careful eye on what senior leaders are doing to improve weaker teaching. Financial management is astute and highly efficient.
 - Governors meet requirements for safeguarding and have all statutory policies in place.

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	135057
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	400160

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Wombell
Headteacher	Hilary Pritchard
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2011
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