

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Hornchurch Road, Hornchurch, Essex, RM12 4TL

Inspection dates 11–12 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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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.

- Almost all pupils make good or better progress and learn well in their lessons.
- From broadly average starting points, pupils make good progress to reach standards that are above average by the end of Year 6.
- All groups of pupils, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding, make good progress and achieve well.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Attendance is consistently above the national average.
- The behaviour and attendance of pupils are good. Pupils show caring and respectful attitudes to each other in lessons and around the school.
- Teaching is good over time so that pupils leave the school well prepared for the next step in their education
- The school is very effective at promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and physical development. Spiritual development and a caring ethos are very strong features throughout the school.
- The headteacher has a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching to a consistently high level. She is supported effectively by a new leadership team and members of the governing body.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils, particularly the more able, are not always given work that is hard enough.
- School leaders do not always apply clear systems for checking how well the school is performing.
- At times, pupils are not given enough opportunities to respond to their teachers' written comments in marking.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 26 lessons, most of which were joint observations with the headteacher or senior leaders.
- During these observations, inspectors assessed pupils' work, spoke to pupils about their learning, looked at teachers' planning and considered the role of additional adults in lessons.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, teachers responsible for particular subjects, a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body.
- School documents and records were scrutinised, including information about pupil progress, school improvement planning, the school's evidence on how well it is doing, school policies including those relating to safeguarding and equality, and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and spoke to some about their experiences in school. Playtimes and lunch breaks were observed when inspectors talked informally with pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed 43 responses to Parent View, the on-line survey for Ofsted, as well as the school's own survey. Inspectors held informal discussions with parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Ann Debono, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Russell Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector

Melanie Clapton

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small minority of pupils are from different ethnic groups and the number who speak English as an additional language is much lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority) is significantly lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special needs supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special needs is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There was some instability in staffing during the last academic year; at the time of the inspection, there were five new teachers, including one newly qualified teacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - making sure that work is always set at the right level of difficulty for all groups of pupils, particularly the more able
 - giving pupils more opportunity to work by themselves
 - ensuring that time is allocated in lessons for pupils to act on the teacher's comments
 - ensuring that target setting for pupils shows more precisely what they need to do to achieve in daily lessons and throughout the year
 - focusing more closely in lessons on improving attainment in writing, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - developing systems so that leaders and governors have a consistent approach to the use of data and other information to check the quality of the school's work
 - refine the strategic improvement plans to indicate more specifically what should be achieved at different points during the year.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children join the Reception Year with skills that are broadly expected for their age and, because of effective teaching, they make consistently good or better progress. They leave the Early Years Foundation Stage with good levels of development in literacy and mathematics. Expectations of children by all adults are high. During the inspection, children who had just started school showed good progress learning their initial sounds and letters.
- All groups of pupils make good progress from this point so that they leave Year 6 with attainment that is consistently above national averages in English and mathematics.
- In 2012, results in the phonics screening test for children in Year 1 were below the national figure. A successful focus on this area, particularly through approaches to help boys engage more readily, has resulted in a significant improvement for all pupil groups. Results in 2013 are above the national percentage.
- Pupils enjoy reading. They used a range of strategies to help them read quite confidently. The newly refurbished library is used professionally so pupils understand how to categorise and look after books.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1. In reading and mathematics, the most recent tests show standards to be above the national average, significantly so in reading. Standards in 2013 in writing have increased but the focus on improving writing is rightly planned to continue.
- The number of pupils exceeding expected progress in reading and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 is well above the national average; progress in writing meets national expectations.
- Lower attaining pupils benefit from good quality support in class. These pupils also make good progress.
- Pupils have targets that are set for them by teachers, but this is not consistent practice; not all pupils know what they need to do to improve their work and meet their end of year targets.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are identified quickly, and appropriate support and interventions are put in place to meet their individual needs. This support is closely tracked by the special educational needs coordinator to ensure they make progress that is at least good from their respective starting points.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding benefit from special group work in reading, writing and basic skills. The funding also ensures that they access extra-curricular activities, for example in music, drama and school visits. As a result of this, eligible pupils make at least good progress. These pupils attain at a similar level to their classmates.
- There is a strong emphasis upon speaking and listening as an important part of learning. Candidates for the new school council presented their manifestos with great confidence to the audience, who in turn offered sensible and informed debate about their speeches.
- The majority of parents who responded to the school survey in 2013 and the on-line Parent View questionnaire for this inspection believe that their children make good progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good. Work in pupils' books shows that they are given a wide range of interesting activities. Opportunities are provided for pupils to develop literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Information and communication technology and access to the school library support the development of pupils' good research and study skills.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school and they talk about their favourite lessons. They comment positively about lessons where they are actively involved, such as science investigations, drama, physical education and swimming.
- Where teaching is best, expectations are high and skilful questioning by the teachers and teaching assistants means that pupils of different abilities have to think carefully about their

answers and draw upon previous learning. As a result, progress is at least good.

- Occasionally, teachers talk for too long so pupils do not get enough opportunities to work independently. This is particularly the case for more able pupils; for example, in one lesson observed during the inspection, these pupils finished extension challenges in mathematics and waited patiently for further instructions rather than starting new work. In such lessons, progress slows.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, assessment information is detailed and it makes effective use of adult observations in school. These observations have a clear purpose and they are specifically linked to the key areas of learning. Engagement of parents is promoted by sharing children's experiences and interests at home in 'All about me' books given at the first induction meeting.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are very positive. Pupils are keen to learn and they show good attitudes to learning and to one another in lessons and at playtimes. They cooperate well together in group and partner work.
- Teachers are aware of pupils' levels of achievement and plan well for different ability groups. Lower attaining pupils or those with additional needs, such as those who speak English as an additional language, are supported well in class using different resources or through help from additional adults. This has resulted in learning which means that progress for these pupils is good or better.
- Marking has been a school focus and this has improved. It is carried out daily and provides appropriate guidance to pupils. However, pupils are not consistently given regular opportunities to reflect and act upon this information linked to their current levels of achievement or to meet year-end goals.
- Teaching effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is a strength of the school and reflects its ethos and Catholicity. Pupils in Year 6 showed great sensitivity when exploring the themes of 'unconditional love' with reference to prayer, song lyrics and personal experience.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- High expectations of behaviour are well established across the whole school. This expectation is modelled by all adults. Pupils are respectful and polite.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Playtime arrangements are managed well, although adults supervising them do not always interact enough with pupils, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- Almost all pupils have very positive attitudes to school. They enjoy their work and they are keen to do well. Occasionally some pupils are too passive because the teaching does not encourage them to participate enough. All pupils respond quickly to staff instructions and there is no evidence of lessons being disrupted by unacceptable behaviour.
- Pupils told inspectors, 'You are never on your own in this school.' They understand the various forms that bullying can take, they say that they feel safe in school and they know about the risks associated with e-safety. They say that there is some bullying and name-calling but they reported confidently that it is dealt with by adults.
- Attendance and punctuality in school are very good and the attendance rates have been consistently above the national average for the last four years. In the few cases where pupils' absence from school is lower, it is improved by support from the home/school worker and local authority education welfare services.
- Care and support for the more vulnerable families in school is highly effective; links to regular support from Catholic counselling services are available for bereavement and specialist support.
- Pupils contribute to the life of the school through the school council, friendship buddies and the

school house prefect system. They carry out these duties with vigilance and pride.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy headteacher, shows strong leadership. They are not complacent and they act robustly to address inconsistent practice. Together they have very high expectations for the future at St Mary's School.
- Senior leaders have extended leadership roles to more staff and these new leaders show a real commitment to improve teaching and learning further. They have begun to check attainment and progress for all pupils across the school, but use of performance data does not yet direct this work strategically enough.
- There is appropriate training for all staff. Training for governors has helped them to monitor what the school offers with greater understanding. New teachers are inducted well and useful partnerships with local schools help leaders to improve their practice.
- There is a clear programme of checks on teaching and learning which has led to pupil achievement in English and mathematics remaining high. School resources are used effectively so that vulnerable groups or those in need of additional support, those with English as an additional language or those eligible for additional funding achieve as well as their peers, and this shows the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- The school's self-evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate. School improvement planning shows the correct priorities. The plan, however, does not make specific enough reference to what should be achieved by agreed points during the year.
- Learning for children is enriched with a wide range of after-school clubs that include karate, music, and chess. The school swimming pool is a facility that is highly valued by the community. It is used extensively and contributes positively to the school's opportunities to promote sport and physical wellbeing. Most pupils leave the school able to swim a mile, a major sporting achievement.
- The school has invited the local authority to help improve identified priorities particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This arrangement is valued by leaders and governors.
- The headteacher and governors have managed school resources efficiently to eradicate a large budget deficit and the new staffing structure matches school priorities. The capacity for future continued improvement is good.
- Recent changes in staff have been questioned by a minority of parents in one year group. This view has been acknowledged by school leaders and governors. Feedback from Parent View, school surveys and informal discussion with parents by inspectors show that the majority of parents are happy with their child's education and the school leadership.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are keen to develop their role in holding leaders to account so that the school becomes an outstanding organisation. They have actively sought training to help them achieve this aim. They have accurate views about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Recently governors led a series of visits during the school day to assess its work for themselves from lessons and obtain views about its effectiveness by talking to staff, parents and pupils. Governors are beginning to ask more challenging questions of the headteacher on the basis of this type of information. Governors understand the achievement of different groups of pupils, including the impact of the use of premium funding. They understand about the quality of teaching in school, and systems are in place for the approval of pay rises so that these are tied into how well staff are performing. Governors ensure that statutory duties such as safeguarding are met and that financial resources are managed well.

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	102329
Local authority	Havering
Inspection number	427170

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	425
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alexandra Kearns
Headteacher	Andrea Elliker
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 March 2009
Telephone number	01708 448430
Fax number	01708 449807
Email address	admin@st-marys.havering.sch.uk

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