

St Mary's Catholic Primary

Longlands Road, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 3BL

Inspection dates 24–25 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher manages teachers' performance well. She has successfully improved teaching and learning by motivating staff and pupils to strive for continuous improvement.
- Pupils achieve well. This is because teaching is good and sometimes outstanding, and pupils are desperately keen to reach the highest standards possible.
- Attainment is above average in Year 2 and Year 6. Reading is significantly above average in both years.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well. They are very proud of their school, feel very safe and well-cared-for, and are very respectful and caring towards others.
- Parents are highly satisfied with the school and what it does for their children. They all say their children are happy and safe, and are taught to behave really well.
- Governors support the school well. They understand data, ask searching questions about it, and examine the school's tracking procedures to check that all pupils are being helped to do their best.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's progress requires improvement and the outdoor area is not used well to promote learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 14 lessons. These included six that were observed jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also observed play and lunchtimes.
- Discussions were held with pupils, governors, staff, and a representative of the local authority.
- Account was taken of the 23 returns in the online questionnaire Parent View and of the views expressed by parents in informal discussions at the start of the school day.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including information about pupils' progress and attendance, the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation document and records and policies about safeguarding.
- The inspector also examined the work in pupils' books, sampled sessions where pupils were learning phonics (sounds and the letters that make them), and listened to pupils read.

Inspection team

Doris Bell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school and pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding, known as the pupil premium, is average. This funding is, for example, for children in local authority care, 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 through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- Because of the small numbers in each year group, all of the above vary from year to year.
- 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 provision and progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that structured play activities always have clear learning intentions that are shared with the children and meet their different needs and interests
 - increasing the level of engagement that adults have with children during structured play so that learning can be noted and moved on more quickly
 - making the new outdoor area an extension of the indoor classroom with activities to cover all aspects of learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- In most years, children start Reception with skills that are typical for their age. They make the progress expected of them and start Year 1 broadly where they should be. From Year 1 onwards, they make good progress and, in Year 2 and Year 6, reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 read well, have good comprehension skills, and use a mixture of phonics and clues from pictures and the text, to help them read unfamiliar words. The school was understandably disappointed in the outcomes of the phonics screening for pupils in Year 1 in 2013 because, although improved on 2012, they were still below the national average. In the screening check, many pupils had tried hard to make sense of the nonsense words and this let some of them down.
- Pupils' writing is engaging. Spelling, grammar and punctuation are usually accurate, and handwriting is neat and legible. Pupils use their writing skills well in different subjects, mindful of their writing targets at all times.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy mathematical learning. They have a deep understanding of number and use it well in mental calculations. For example, pupils in Year 6 demonstrated how they use their knowledge of seven plus three to add 70 and 30, then 700 and 300 before searching for patterns to help them add and subtract numbers in between quickly and accurately in their heads.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good and sometimes outstanding progress. This is because teaching and support staff understand their needs and the school leadership makes sure that the right equipment is there to help them.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium also make good progress. The school uses the funding it receives for these pupils to bring their attainment up to the levels their ability shows they are capable of reaching. As a result, their attainment is less than one term behind other pupils in English and mathematics, compared with over two terms nationally and, in some year groups, they are ahead of other pupils.
- Most able pupils are strongly encouraged to aim for the highest levels of attainment and they throw themselves into doing so. For example, more pupils are now aspiring to reach Level 6 in the national tests than did so last year and they are being supported well by the school in doing this.

The quality of teaching is good

- Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Learning is purposeful and challenging yet relaxed and, as pupils described it, fun. In most lessons, teaching strikes the right balance between instruction and allowing pupils to work independently.
- Teaching often inspires pupils to give of their best. Pupils' learning is securely based on what teachers learn from marking that is both supportive and developmental, and activities are often adjusted during lessons in response to how well pupils are doing. All of this helps pupils to make progress that is at least good.

- The teaching of mathematics has improved since the previous inspection. It is rooted in investigative work requiring pupils to use their skills to solve problems. It is also constantly related to everyday life thereby instilling in the pupils the value of good mathematical learning.
- Reading and writing are taught well. Phonics sessions visited showed that the teaching of phonics is good. Reception children already recognise letter sounds and names, and use them to sound out and read simple three- and four-letter words.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to question and probe pupils' understanding of what they read and to extend their vocabulary and ability to write well with good attention to audience and purpose.
- Highly skilled, well-briefed teaching assistants contribute effectively to pupils' learning. For example, an innovative approach to teaching a small group of pupils how to keep a number in their head and to count on from it enabled the pupils to move on to using number lines correctly to do the same thing.
- Occasionally, pupils are kept together for too long, leaving them very little time to practise what they have learned in their writing. At such times, the pace of learning slows.
- In Reception, a wide range of activities is planned for but the learning required from them is unclear. Also, because adults do not intervene enough as children play, any potential learning is limited. The recently completed outdoor area does not yet reflect what they do in the indoor classroom.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are justifiably very proud of their school. A major factor in their good achievement is their extremely positive attitudes to learning. Pupils want to do as well as they possibly can. They very much enjoy the challenges associated with striving for the highest levels possible. Their above average attendance helps them succeed.
- Reception children have settled in well. They enjoy the 'special friends' they have in the Year 6 'buddies' who look after them at breaks and lunchtimes. The buddies help the new arrivals to join in games and play safely, as well as to take turns and listen to others. Year 6 pupils recall fondly the buddies they had and how they were helped.
- Pupils have high levels of respect for adults and for each other. They say they are successfully taught how to keep themselves safe in and out of school. The school is vigilant in caring for all of its pupils and, when necessary, it works with families who might need help to deal with different situations.
- Pupils see bullying as a 'non-issue' in school, reporting that some could easily have developed last year due to some teasing but did not because it was reported and staff responded quickly. Pupils understand all forms of bullying, including those associated with using the internet and mobile telephones. They have many opportunities to use computers safely in school, and make good use of them.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different faiths and cultures. They appreciate the differences in ability and background that make each person unique. They respect and value each other's differences and know that discrimination of any sort is wrong.

- Pupils raise money for charities at home and abroad, most notably for schools in Uganda. They readily accept responsibility, for example, as monitors and school councillors, and know that their views are valued and acted upon. They appreciate the good range of visits, visitors and the well-attended after-school activities that enrich their learning and personal development.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher sets high expectations for staff and pupils. Those expectations are met well by a strong team that wants the best for the pupils, and by pupils who want to do really well.
- The checks made on teaching and learning are robust and accurate and staff respond well to the advice given. This was evident in the adjustments made to teaching on the second day of the inspection following feedback on the first day.
- The school has an accurate view of itself. This leads to a school improvement plan with the right priorities and challenging objectives to improve staff and pupil performance. Taken alongside the improvement since the previous inspection, and the challenging targets now set, all of this demonstrates the school's strong capacity for further improvement.
- The local authority has every confidence in the school. It provides an appropriate level of support, for example, helping the governing body to understand data and challenge outcomes.
- The school ensures equality of opportunity for all. The vibrant, attractive learning environment is warm and welcoming, and excellent displays celebrate pupils' achievements.
- Parents spoken to all agreed that the school is 'like one big family, where everyone cares for everyone else'. They attribute this to the leadership of the headteacher, and the open relationships they have with the staff.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' personal and academic development equally well. It engages and motivates the pupils because they have a say in some of what they learn. It fosters good relationships with the church and the local and wider communities and contributes to pupils' understanding of global issues.
- The new curriculum for the Early Years Foundation Stage has been implemented appropriately. However, leadership of this key stage requires improvement to make sure that there is a clear focus on learning at all times, indoors and out.
- The provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is managed well. The staff responsible track each pupil's progress meticulously to make sure it remains good. The school is vigilant in supporting all of its pupils, meeting their diverse needs and ensuring their safety and well-being. Current safeguarding requirements are fully met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors gain first-hand information about pupils' progress through visits to the school, analysing data and checking tracking systems to ensure all pupils are making good progress. They support the headteacher well in making decisions about staffing and staff salaries, based on the management of teachers' performance. They are also knowledgeable about the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching, and what would need to be done should there be any underperformance. They check the impact of the pupil premium, which is used wisely to support learning by extending one-to-one and small group tuition for relevant pupils of all abilities. Sensible decisions have been made about using primary school sports funding

to give pupils greater access to a wider range of sporting activities, including dance, and opportunities to participate in various fixtures with other schools.

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	112904
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	425077

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	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Mastin
Headteacher	Ann King
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2008
Telephone number	01663 742412
Fax number	01663 742412
Email address	info@st-marys-pri.derbyshire.sch.uk

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