

St Mary's C of E VA Primary School, Hatfield Broad Oak

Hatfield Broad Oak, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM22 7HH

Inspection dates 8–9 October 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.

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points in both key stages. They attain above average standards by the time they leave the school.
- Achievement, in Key Stage 2, in all subjects has been maintained, or improved, over recent years, with much better progress in mathematics in 2013.
- Teaching has improved. Teaching is good overall, and outstanding in some lessons.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils know they are valued and appreciate the support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Children make an outstanding start to school because they are taught so well in the Reception class.
- Pupils are extremely polite and considerate and they feel very safe and happy in school. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding, and this makes a considerable contribution to the good progress they make.
- Pupils are provided with many memorable learning experiences through an interesting and exciting curriculum.
- Parents are very positive about the school and know that their children are safe, happy and well looked after.
- The headteacher and the governing body direct the school's work very well. They have the full support of the teaching and non-teaching staff.
- Governors are knowledgeable and hold leaders to account for the school's performance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes, teachers do not provide just the right level of challenge for all pupils so they do not always reach their potential.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is not always of good quality. They do not always tell them what they need to do next or expect pupils to respond to their marking.
- Key subject leaders have not been able to carry out a range of monitoring activities so have not been fully able to assist teachers in improving their practice.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited nine lessons, taught by five teachers and/or teaching assistants. All of these lessons were seen together with the headteacher.
- Samples of pupils' written work were analysed. The inspector listened to some pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 reading.
- Meetings were held with school staff, a group of pupils, governors and a school improvement officer from the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 25 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 11 questionnaires completed by staff. He also spoke to several parents informally at the start of the school day.
- The inspector looked at a range of evidence including: the work in pupils' books; monitoring records; the school's own data on pupils' progress; records of governing body meetings; and policies, procedures and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

David Herd, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's is much smaller than the average primary school.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The headteacher was not at the school when the school was last inspected. She was appointed in 2011.
- A much smaller-than-average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which provides extra funding to help certain groups. In this school, it applies to pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have statements of special educational needs is well-below average.
- The school meets the current government 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?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils' achievement becomes outstanding, particularly in writing and mathematics, by making sure that teachers consistently:
 - provide just the right level of challenge for all pupils and make sure that they reach their potential
 - praise what pupils have done well, tell them what they need to do next and make sure that pupils respond appropriately in their marking of pupils' work and in the guidance they provide.
- Improve the leadership and management in the school, by:
 - providing the necessary time and the training, so that key subject leaders are able to undertake a range of monitoring activities in all classrooms to assist teachers in improving their practice.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Small year groups mean there can be more variation in attainment year on year than in larger schools. Pupils' attainment in English is usually above average at the end of Year 6. In mathematics, it has improved at both Key Stage 1 and at Key Stage 2 in 2012 and 2013 to broadly average levels.
- Children enter the school with skills that vary year on year, particularly in reading and writing. They make outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage in all areas of learning. Children's attainment is at least average, and often above, at the end of the Reception Year.
- In Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment has varied from above average to broadly average in their reading, writing and mathematics. Reliable school data show that pupils in Key Stage 1 usually make good progress. Currently, school data show that pupils in Year 2 have attained standards that are above last year's national average. (No validated data for 2013 are yet available.)
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 generally make good progress in English to reach above average standards by the time they leave the school. In mathematics they also make good progress to reach broadly average, but improving standards by the end of Year 6. In 2012, their progress in reading was good, leading their attainment to be better than the national average. School data show that good proportions of pupils made more than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics in 2013. Results in mathematics went up sharply.
- Pupils read widely and often. They enjoy reading fiction and non-fiction books, finding out about things that interest them. They use their phonics skills (the sounds that letters make) well to work out what words say and understand what they are reading. Pupils make good progress in reading so that, by the time they leave the school, they read well and attain high standards.
- Achievement in mathematics has improved in the last two years because pupils learn to calculate accurately and then apply these skills when solving problems. For example, in Year 6, pupils used their skills confidently to solve problems involving square and cube numbers. However, other pupils, including more-able pupils, are sometimes not provided with sufficient challenge to help them reach the standards they are capable of.
- Pupils made expected progress in writing in 2012. Currently, data on pupils' progress, learning in lessons and evidence in their books show that progress is improving. However, teachers' marking does not provide pupils with next steps often enough to make sure that their progress is consistently good.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because their needs are identified early and they are provided with one-to-one or small group teaching to help them catch up. Their progress is checked closely and further support provided if necessary.
- There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in 2012 to comment on their attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6. However, pupils in the school as a whole for whom the school receives pupil premium funding make the same good progress as other pupils, and their attainment is not significantly different from that of their classmates.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils develop very good relationships with their teachers and teaching assistants. They speak well of the very effective support and guidance provided by teachers and other adults. Staff are extremely supportive of the school and want to do their best for the pupils.
- Teachers are regularly held to account for the progress that pupils are making through meetings with the headteacher. The performance of every pupil is tracked, and any pupil with additional learning needs is supported effectively, ensuring that all pupils achieve well, especially in reading.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and what their behaviour should be like. Teachers and teaching assistants use questions extremely well to check pupils' understanding in lessons. They assess pupils' attainment accurately and use this information effectively to plan the next steps in learning.
- The teaching of reading and phonics is good. Focused phonics sessions make sure that pupils learn early reading skills. Features of these sessions are teachers' clear instructions, awareness of the need to keep a brisk pace and their subject knowledge.
- The teaching of writing is improving. The teaching in one lesson showed children in the Reception class how they could use their knowledge of words to write a story based on a 'superhero'. Very effective teaching guided pupils to achieve outstanding outcomes, producing delightful stories.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved. For example, pupils in Year 1 and 2 were challenged to use positional language and could turn shapes clockwise or anti-clockwise. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were challenged to sort two-dimensional shapes in Venn diagrams according to their own chosen criteria. The level of challenge in these lessons was good. However, pupils are not always provided with sufficient challenge because their learning is sometimes too easy or revisits things they already know.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well. Teachers and teaching assistants take time to consider the learning needs of each individual pupil and design programmes to match their ability levels. The teaching of catch-up programmes in mathematics is effective because it is delivered through regular sessions that bring about good progress.
- Pupils' work in English and mathematics is not marked well enough. Teachers do not regularly note what the pupils have done well and what needs to be improved. Teachers are not consistent in insisting that pupils respond to their marking. These strategies have not become established practice to ensure that pupils exceed expected progress, particularly in writing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are keen to learn in lessons. They participate well and work independently or with others without fuss, with even the youngest children maintaining their effort, concentration and enthusiasm. This is because most lessons are exciting and engaging. Lessons are rarely disrupted due to bad behaviour.
- Behaviour in lessons, around the school and on the playground is outstanding. Pupils are polite and courteous. Behaviour is managed well by all staff and this contributes to very positive learning in classrooms. Pupils and staff agree that pupils' behaviour is outstanding.

- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They have an outstanding understanding of what constitutes an unsafe situation, including the importance of being safe on the internet. They are aware of bullying but say that it is extremely rare in the school. They know to whom they would go if there are any concerns and say that, if there are any incidents, they are confident that they are dealt with effectively by the school staff.
- Parents are, rightly, extremely positive about pupils' behaviour and their safety. They say that their children feel safe, are well looked after and are very happy at the school.
- Pupils are proud of their school and their sporting and academic achievements. They say that they are treated fairly and are allowed to have their say, for example, through the active and effective school council. They say that they are supported exceptionally well by their teachers and teaching assistants.
- The school has not had to record any racist or bullying incidents for several years. Pupils' use of language that others might find offensive is extremely rare.
- Pupils' attendance is usually above average but, in this small school, can vary a lot from year to year. A significant outbreak of illness in the academic Year 2012-13 disproportionately lowered attendance, for example. Pupils' attendance for the current year is above average. Pupils are rarely late for school and there have been few exclusions of pupils from school in recent years.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's future. She has had a significant impact, along with teachers and governors, in bringing about improvement since she was appointed to her post. Plans for improvement are tightly focused on bringing about more improvement to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, especially in writing and mathematics.
- The headteacher uses a range of approaches, including rigorous evaluation of data on pupils' achievements and observing teachers at work, to check on the effectiveness of teaching. This leads to the school having a good understanding of what it does well and what needs to be improved.
- Key subject leaders have not been provided with essential time or training for them to undertake a range of monitoring activities, including the analysis of data and first-hand observations of teaching and learning in classrooms, in order for them to improve practice and accelerate pupils' progress further.
- Arrangements for judging teachers' performance are robust. Senior leaders know where the best teaching is located. There are established procedures for making links between teachers' performance and pay progression.
- Pupils' learning, in a range of subjects, is well planned and provides them with memorable learning experiences. Visits to Hatfield Forest, and visitors to the school, further add to pupils' enjoyment of school and develop their confidence. Pupils use writing and mathematical skills well in other subjects, for example in history and science. The school provides a variety of clubs and activities, including artistic, sporting and musical experiences.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through interesting

lessons, classroom environments and displays. Assemblies, particularly, promote pupils' spiritual development when, for example, 'wondering' questions are posed. Consequently, pupils work well together in practical activities and discussion. They learn to listen to each other and respect others' comments. Pupils' understanding of global issues is promoted well through, for example, developing links with a school in Kenya, and this contributes well to pupils' cultural understanding.

- The school tackles discrimination well and promotes good relationships and equal opportunities for all pupils. As a result, all pupils get on well with each other and make good progress in their learning – helping them to be prepared for life in modern society.
- Parents are, correctly, very satisfied with the way the school keeps their children safe, happy and well looked after. They say that the school provides them with enough information regarding their children's progress. All those responding to the online questionnaire would recommend this school to other parents.
- The school works effectively with other schools in the area and with the local authority. Teachers and teaching assistants have benefited from advice and guidance that has helped to improve teaching, particularly in mathematics. This has led to improved levels of teaching and guidance for the pupils, ensuring that they make good progress.
- The school has appropriate plans to make effective use of the recently allocated sports funding. It is focusing on long term improvements, through improving teachers' skills, as well as increasing pupils' engagement in physical education and sport.
- The school has received timely support from the local authority. Work has included the provision of specialist mathematics advice which has supported the improvements made last year. Currently, the local authority is providing 'light touch' support, recognising the improvements that are being made at the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They are fully involved in checking how effectively the school improvement plan is being put into practice and understand how the school is doing compared with similar schools nationally. Governors maintain an overview of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement through making visits to school and receiving reports from senior staff. They hold senior leaders to account and use thorough systems to make sure that the quality of teaching continues to improve. The governing body has accurately evaluated the impact of external support and the school's use of the additional funding for specific groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for the pupil premium, and knows what difference this money is making. Governors make sure that all national requirements for safeguarding are met.

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	115178
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	425370

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	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susie Dutton
Headteacher	Sonia Strickland
Date of previous school inspection	25 September 2008
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