

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Dunstable Road, Caddington, Luton, LU1 4BB

## Inspection dates

8–9 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching, while improving, has not promoted consistently good progress over time.
- Until recently, pupils have not been making sufficient progress in mathematics.
- Although gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils are closing, some are still attaining at a lower standard than other pupils. This applies particularly to the older groups of pupils.
- Some pupils are only just starting to make sufficient progress in gaining a strong understanding of the links between letter and word sounds. Again, this applies mainly to older pupils.
- Some of the changes, introduced by school leaders, are relatively recent. While helping to improve pupils' progress they have not had long enough to impact fully on the standards pupils attain.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, supported by senior leaders has improved the quality of teaching and learning by tackling weaknesses that were identified at the last inspection.
- Teachers work closely together to ensure that the school's systems for improving learning are implemented well in every classroom.
- The care and support given to all pupils by the school, underpinned by its system of values, means pupils behave well and are keen to learn.
- The recent work of the subject leaders has increased the school's capacity to make further improvements.
- Governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and challenge leaders to make further improvements.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed ten lessons, some jointly with senior leaders. They also looked at pupils' books, listened to pupils read and examined display work.
- In addition a number of other lessons and activities were visited to determine how well the needs of individual pupils are taken into account.
- Meetings were held with two different groups of pupils, members of the governing body, a range of the school's subject leaders and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 12 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) and talked to parents during the inspection.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

St.John Burkett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Josephine Lewis

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Mary's is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are both higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is in line with the national average, whereas supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. This is additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- A breakfast and after school club is provided for pupils by the school.
- The school has this year changed from lower to primary status, and Year 5 are now being taught at the school for the first time.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better over time by:
  - ensuring that work is always matched precisely to the ability of all pupils
  - harnessing pupils' enthusiasm for learning to ensure they work hard in every lesson and progress well
  - make sure that all pupils have opportunities to work independently
  - developing the knowledge, skills and understanding of all pupils and groups of pupils in mathematics and for more able pupils in writing
- Identify the gaps in learning for older pupils and ensure that teaching helps them to catch up on previously lost ground by:
  - matching work to ability in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics so that those who have fallen behind are able to achieve well and make progress at the same rate as their peers.
  - pupils have a clear understanding of how to match letters and sounds.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- The achievement of pupils requires improvement because, over time, the progress made by some groups of pupils has not been consistently good, particularly for the older pupils at the school. This is due to weak teaching in the past.
- There are some gaps in learning for the older pupils in the school and their skills in matching letters to sounds means some are reading at a lower level than expected.
- Children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge which are generally below those expected for their age, including in communication, literacy and mathematics. However, the good progress they make enables them to catch up these skills so that they are closer to the national average when they join Year 1.
- Pupils continue to make good progress across Key Stage 1. Attainment is rising due to more consistently good teaching and, by the end of Year 2, is in line with that expected nationally. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Y1 phonics check has risen significantly in the past year due to more focused teaching.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils mostly make the progress they should. However, over time, previous weaknesses in teaching have left gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge, such as when linking letters to sounds in reading.
- The school has made mathematics lessons interesting for all pupils by planning practical and exciting tasks for them to do. One group, for example, were making shapes such as squares and pentagons by using very large pieces of elastic. This approach has engaged pupils' enthusiasm, and, consequently, achievement is rising across the school. Further similar work is now improving pupils' achievement in writing, particularly for boys. Pupils' attainment in writing has, until recently, been low and the gap between boys' and girls' attainment wider than that seen nationally.
- The school has systematically introduced improvements to enable pupils to make faster progress. Teachers plan carefully for all groups and ensure that all pupils are consistently challenged to achieve their best work. They talk to pupils during lessons about how they can do even better. Teaching is improving because teachers work closely together and have started to share best practice.
- The progress of most groups of pupils, including those learning English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, is similar to all pupils. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Until recently, the achievement of this group of pupils was below that expected but has improved significantly due to the close match teachers now make between the work planned and the needs of each pupil.
- Pupils known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium make progress that is close to that of their peers. In 2012, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals were more than a year behind their classmates in English and were more than two terms behind in mathematics, but that gap has now closed substantially. This is due to the good use the school is making of the funding available to closely match pupils' work to their individual needs and to ensure additional support helps them to achieve well, such as that of the Jigsaw Education Support Service which is working with pupils to boost confidence and to help them to

communicate well.

- Pupils are well supported through the use of the primary school sport funding. For example, the school's first Year 5 are taught to swim, an activity new to the school, and clubs to encourage participation, such as a football club, are well received by pupils. Staff training ensures that pupils are taught how to follow a healthy lifestyle in their lessons.

### **The quality of teaching**

### **requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement because, although achievement is now improving, over the last three years, pupils have not achieved consistently well.
- The large majority of the teaching seen during the inspection was good or better, and half was outstanding. Until recently, variability in the quality of teaching meant attainment and progress for some groups of pupils was below that expected. Consequently, there are gaps in skills and knowledge for the oldest groups of pupils. Gaps in levels of attainment for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and for those eligible for the pupil premium funding, have only recently been closed.
- The school is working hard to improve teaching but some gaps remain. In the large majority of lessons, pupils are enthusiastic to learn. Just occasionally they have to be reminded to channel all their energy into working hard.
- Whilst work is always matched to ability in reading, writing and maths, this is not always planned in other subjects; consequently pupils make less progress in these lessons than they otherwise might.
- More able pupils have not made as much progress in writing as their peers. This is because in some lessons they do not have enough opportunities to work independently.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables children to make good progress because there is a very close match of the needs of the individual children to the provision which is planned and organised. Skills in literacy, communication and mathematics are developed strongly through well thought-out strategies and because the teachers and other adults work very closely together.
- Teaching is improving due, in part, to a growing use of good questioning techniques by teachers which enables them to assess pupils' work accurately and to plan work which meets pupils' interests and needs.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs are well supported in class because teachers and other adults plan carefully to meet their diverse learning needs.
- Teachers have focused recently on improving the teaching of mathematics. They have changed their practice and now plan exciting and interesting lessons; for example, in one class, pupils were asked to estimate the total cost of three toys using real examples. This is making a positive difference to the achievement, enthusiasm and interest of pupils across the school. There has also been an improvement in the teaching of the sounds which letters make in the younger year groups which has ensured a growing number of pupils meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check.
- Teachers are conscientious in their marking and the good practice developed since the last

inspection is having a positive impact in helping to increase the rates of pupils' progress. Teachers are continuing to develop their practice. Growing use is made of targets, which are written in books or on reading cards. Consequently, pupils are talking with growing confidence about the next steps they are taking in their learning.

- The school shares and develops teachers' best teaching skills through visits to other classrooms and schools and through systems of mentoring. This is improving the quality of teaching, and the proportion of teaching which is good or better has improved since the last inspection.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Behaviour is good in classrooms and around the school because pupils are clear about the school's expectations. The school has a system of 'values' which strongly supports good behaviour, and which pupils readily talk about.
- Pupils work well with each other and adults, and value the rewards for good behaviour which the school offers. They are unfailingly polite. Staff model good behaviour and involve pupils in team-building activities with their peers.
- Pupils' attitudes to mathematics and to other subjects have improved due to the open-ended and interesting activities teachers now plan for them. Pupils expect to be challenged in their work and to enjoy their lessons. When questioned, many pupils said that their favourite aspect of going to school was their lessons in their classrooms.
- Staff plan closely together to ensure teaching is similarly well-matched to pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils' attitudes to learning have improved, sound in the knowledge that their lessons will be interesting.
- Improved teaching in the older age groups, through a good match of work to individual pupils' needs and ability, is enabling pupils to develop their attitudes to learning and to consequently make increasing progress.
- Pupils enjoy school. They have good opportunities to contribute to the school, such as being on the School Council, choosing equipment for the new playground for Year 1 and 2 or ordering items of supplies for other pupils to use.
- Pupils say that there is always an adult available to sort out any situation which arises. They are familiar with the various types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and there are no recent recorded incidents of this nature.
- Attendance has risen and is above the national expectation. This is because teachers make lessons interesting and pupils are eager to take part and enjoy their learning.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher has, over the last three years, systematically addressed the key areas the school needed to improve to raise achievement. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, which had been falling, is rising as a result of the work of the school's leaders. Due to improvements in the school's leadership, the school's capacity to make further improvements is good.

- The school has accurately evaluated the provision it makes and introduced a range of measures which are improving teaching and learning. Teachers are given effective feedback on their performance and have attended training which has enabled them to develop their skills. The planning of lessons has improved and work is matched accurately to the needs of every pupil. Assessments are now accurately made and teachers have improved the advice they give to pupils on how to improve their work. Consequently, the quality of teaching is improving and achievement is rising.
- Teachers and leaders work closely together to ensure that any developments which are introduced to improve achievement are implemented well in every classroom.
- The improvement of the school buildings and its classrooms enables teachers to teach their lessons in an interesting way in a bright and attractive environment.
- The senior leadership team and subject leaders have developed their skills during the last three years and can now demonstrate improvements in areas they lead. For example, the mathematics leader has achieved a professional qualification and led improvements across the school; such as, a change in the way lessons are taught so that all pupils are included in practical and interesting activities.
- Systems for the management of the performance of staff have been put into place by the headteacher and have ensured that teaching across the school has improved. All staff are taking an increased responsibility for the results of the pupils they work with, following the implementation of systems which track the progress pupils make through the school and leading to an accurate match of planning to the needs of each pupil.
- The school has benefitted from the effective support from the local authority and through visits by a School Improvement Professional, who has worked with the headteacher to ensure teaching and learning have improved.
- The curriculum has been developed to incorporate the interests of pupils, and is now more active and practical in approach. In one lesson, pupils were investigating how porous different rocks were by pouring water on them to see how much was absorbed. This practical approach is supplemented by imaginative activities for mixed-ability groups beyond their lessons, such as a 'shape walk', where pupils left their classroom to find examples of different shapes around the school.
- The school has strongly developed links over the last two years with other local schools and also with other Catholic schools. This has led to opportunities for pupils in shared sporting and other events and has helped staff to develop their practice.
- Primary school sport funding is well managed and used to extend the opportunities available. Pupils are keen to talk about the activities they can now access, such as taking part in a new football club.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors provide an effective level of challenge to the headteacher based on excellent quality of information which they receive from him and from other sources. They hold the headteacher to account for the school's performance. Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching across the school, and have ensured that recent appointments have led to improvements. They ensure that teachers' pay is linked to the progress of their pupils.
  - The governors have a good understanding of how pupil premium and the primary school sport funding are spent. Governors have a highly accurate understanding of the different rates of

pupils' progress across the school and know where the strengths and weaknesses of provision lie.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109630
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	425194

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–10
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	178
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Pauline Cotton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Steve Chiswell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 602420
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