

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Stanier Street, Newcastle, ST5 2SU

**Inspection dates** 10–11 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		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement.

- Pupils in Key Stage 2 do not always make the progress they should, particularly in mathematics, because there is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching.
- In some lessons, more-able pupils do not make good enough progress when the teacher talks for too long or pupils spend too much time on work that is easy.
- There are inconsistencies in how well teachers mark pupils' work. Not all pupils are sure about what they need to do next to improve their work, particularly in mathematics.
- There are not always enough planned opportunities for pupils, particularly at the beginning of Key Stage 2, to improve their basic numeracy skills or to practise solving problems.
- When leaders check on the quality of lessons or make plans for future development, they do not always consider carefully enough the impact on the pupils' progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- Children make a good start to their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 because they are taught well.
- Pupils make rapid progress at the end of Key Stage 2 because more is expected of them. Those pupils who need help succeed because they receive good-quality support.
- Boys and girls enjoy reading very much because the school teaches it well.
- Strong relationships between staff and pupils contribute well to pupils' good personal development.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are courteous and polite. They enjoy school, feel safe and are well looked after. Most pupils develop into mature individuals.
- The executive headteacher, the two deputy headteachers, other senior leaders and the governors work together effectively as a team and have successfully improved the overall quality of teaching and reversed a trend of falling standards in Key Stage 2.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons, four of which were observed with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with pupils, representatives of the governing body and staff, including senior and subject leaders.
- A telephone discussion took place with a representative from the local authority.
- There were too few responses for inspectors to take account of the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors analysed the school's own parent questionnaires and spoke informally to parents and carers.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's development plan, policies, data about pupils' progress and attainment, and how the school sets targets for teachers to improve their work. They also looked at child protection and safeguarding procedures.

## Inspection team

Kath Campbell, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Linda Brown	Additional Inspector
Peter Lawley	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Mary's is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- Over three-quarters of pupils are White British. The remainder of pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds.
- Just under a fifth of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- An average proportion of pupils are supported by pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are supported at school action. A similar proportion are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides care for pupils before and after school.
- In recent times, the school has experienced a period of staffing disruption, most notably at senior leadership level. There have been several long-term absences since the previous inspection.

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

- Improve the consistency of teaching in Key Stage 2, and raise the proportion of good and outstanding teaching throughout the school, by making sure that all teachers:
  - have the opportunity to share and learn from the good practice that exists within its own and its partner schools
  - do not spend too long talking at the beginning of lessons, so that they leave enough time for pupils to practise their skills
  - use marking effectively, particularly in mathematics, to guide pupils to the next steps in their learning.
- Raise attainment in mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 2, by:
  - making sure that all teachers have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve, so that they move pupils who find work easy on to harder work earlier in lessons
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their basic mental calculation skills
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills to solving problems.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management by making sure that:
  - when leaders monitor the quality of lessons, they focus with greater precision on the impact of teaching on learning
  - plans for improvement link all areas for development more precisely to their impact on attainment.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because, until recently, not all pupils in Key Stage 2 made enough progress, particularly in mathematics. During a period of staffing instability, attainment in this key stage fell and long-term absences at senior leadership level slowed the pace of improvement.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics requires improvement and is currently a priority for development. The recent staffing disruption meant that some pupils, particularly the older pupils, underachieved. Too much teaching was not good enough and pupils made slow progress because some teachers lacked confidence with the subject.
- To some extent, older pupils are still catching up, but the current work of pupils in Years 5 and 6 shows a rapid upturn because much more teaching is of good quality. However, there is some way further to go before the quality of teaching is consistent enough to be good. For example, some pupils at the beginning of Key Stage 2 are not sufficiently challenged and do not have enough opportunity to extend or apply their mathematical skills to real-life situations.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is similar to that of other pupils. The school supports these pupils far more effectively than in the past.
- The school has used its pupil premium funding well over a period of time to improve pupils' basic skills. In 2012, the gap between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and their classmates closed to the equivalent of half a term behind in English and a term behind in mathematics. The gap is narrower than seen nationally, although it did not close further in 2013.
- Children start in the Nursery class with skills that are below those expected for their age. An increasing number of children speak English as an additional language. As a result, early language, literacy and numeracy skills on entry are often weaker than in the past. Children achieve well throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage because staff take every opportunity to develop children's language skills. By the time children move into Year 1, most achieve a good level of development.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1 through good teaching, and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average. Pupils who are at an early stage of speaking English achieve well because they receive good-quality one-to-one support and gain the confidence to join in with all activities.
- Attainment in Key Stage 2 is rising. In 2013, the Year 6 pupils made good progress and reached above-average standards in both English and mathematics. Strong teaching meant that all groups of pupils made good progress. Support was targeted very effectively at those in most need, and there are examples of outstanding individual achievement.
- Pupils' achievement in reading throughout the school is good. The way in which the school teaches phonics (letters and the sounds they make) helps younger pupils to gain the confidence to work out unfamiliar words. Reading is a very important part of pupils' daily work. The school engages families well in their children's development of reading skills and has invested in resources, such as tablet computers to motivate pupils, particularly boys. Older pupils show maturity when discussing favourite books and authors.

- Raising attainment in writing has been a whole-school area for development and there is good evidence in pupils' current and past work that initiatives to increase the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels are proving effective. Strategies to develop an enthusiasm for writing, particularly among boys, have proved successful. Younger pupils are keen to have a go at writing independently right from the start. Some of the work of older pupils, such as their Second World War topic work, is of high quality. Most write with confidence and maturity.

### **The quality of teaching**

### **requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement because its quality varies and not enough is good. Nonetheless, there has been improvement since the previous inspection. Much of the teaching observed during this inspection was good, but still too much requires improvement and a small amount of inadequate teaching remains.
- Inconsistencies are clear in pupils' present and past work. Not all teachers have high enough expectations, particularly with regard to what they demand of pupils in mathematics. Whilst the quality of work in literacy is mostly good, there is much greater variation in the quality of work in mathematics. Sometimes pupils find work difficult because they are let down by their lack of basic numeracy skills. Not all teachers pay enough attention to developing pupils' mental calculation and problem-solving skills.
- Another key weakness within teaching lies in the inconsistent way in which teachers check on the progress of individual pupils and share this information with them. All too often, marking does not guide pupils to the next steps in their learning. This is particularly the case in mathematics.
- Teachers sometimes talk for too long, leaving pupils with too little time to practise skills. They do not always move pupils who find learning easy on to harder work early enough in lessons.
- Children do well in the Early Years Foundation Stage because adults make learning fun. Indoor and outdoor areas are used effectively to develop children's skills. Despite only being in school a few weeks, children are settled and excited about their work.
- Reading is taught well. Pupils quickly develop a secure knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and are encouraged to read widely at home and at school. Boys and girls of all ages develop a love of reading because it has a very high profile within the school.
- Where teaching is at its most effective, learning moves forward at a rapid pace and pupils want to do their best. In a Reception class lesson, children were lively, animated and engrossed in their activities. The level of concentration of the most able children was impressively high as they started to write their own sentences. Good-quality discussion and questioning helped children of all abilities to make good gains in their learning.
- Adults who support teachers in the classroom make sure that success is enjoyed by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as those eligible for the pupil premium.

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

### **are good**

- Nearly all pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They are keen to talk about their work and develop positive attitudes to learning. These make a strong contribution towards their good personal development. Pupils want to learn more because they enjoy the work they are

given and they want to succeed because they get along well with the adults who teach and support them.

- The strong emphasis on developing children's personal and social skills in the Nursery and Reception classes establishes secure foundations for teachers to build upon in the rest of the school. Routines are well established and children learn quickly to wait their turn and listen carefully to other children when they are talking.
- The school is a caring community where pupils say they feel safe and are confident they will be taken seriously if they have any concerns. They display a good understanding of how to stay safe, including when using the internet and computers.
- In discussion, pupils say that incidents of bullying are very rare. They are confident that such incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively to make sure there is no recurrence.
- Assemblies are times when pupils enjoy coming together as a community. These occasions make a good contribution towards pupils' social and spiritual development.
- A small number of pupils with challenging behaviour attend the school. These pupils receive good-quality support and this helps them to participate fully in school life. Very occasionally, some pupils, often boys, do not give of their best and become easily distracted.
- Attendance is average and pupils enjoy coming to school. The learning mentor keeps a very careful check on the attendance of pupils who may be at risk of falling behind and works successfully with a small minority of families.

## **The leadership and management**

## **requires improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because, during a period of considerable staffing instability, particularly at senior leadership level, standards slipped in Key Stage 2. Although senior leaders are now driving through improvement with a sense of urgency, the school has not always moved forward at a fast enough pace. Plans for future development have not always focused enough on measuring the impact of initiatives on attainment and progress.
- The ways in which leaders and the governing body check teachers' performance have been strengthened to make sure that teachers are no longer rewarded unless pupils make good progress. These checks are rigorous and have improved the overall quality of teaching since the previous inspection. However, leaders' lesson observations do not focus with enough precision on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.
- The recent restructuring of the senior leadership team and reorganisation of subject leadership have had a good impact in a short space of time. The executive headteacher and two deputy headteachers provide an effective partnership that is totally focused on raising attainment. A good example of their effectiveness can be seen in the well-targeted initiatives introduced to develop teachers' expertise in mathematics and the impact of initiatives designed to stem the decline in attainment in Key Stage 2 in 2013.
- Other senior leaders know the school well and have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. They have been instrumental in driving through improvement by, for example, supporting and working alongside teachers to improve performance.
- Subject leaders are clear about what improvements are needed. They have greater involvement

in checking whether pupils make enough progress in their subjects and are able to identify gaps in learning quickly. Teachers are far more accountable than in the past for the standards achieved. This means that pupils in danger of falling behind get back on track sooner.

- The school's collaboration with other local schools benefits the pupils at St Mary's. They share expertise and initiatives and pupils have many opportunities to join together with friends from their partner schools to extend and develop, for example, their creative skills. The school is forging links with its partner schools in order to improve the quality of teaching and to share expertise. However, this is not yet a fully established part of the professional development of all staff. Teachers do not currently have enough opportunities to share and learn from best practice at St Mary's or at partner schools.
- Pupils have many rich and diverse learning experiences that contribute greatly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Creative arts feature strongly, and regular visits and visitors further enhance pupils' enjoyment of school. Sport is an important part of school life. The school has ambitious plans for its primary sports funding, including the creation of a temporary climbing wall. It already provides many sporting opportunities and intends to use this funding to further widen the range.
- Safeguarding procedures meet current government requirements.
- The local authority adviser knows the school well, reviews its work regularly and provides training, for example, to improve the quality of teaching when requested.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The recently restructured governing body is developing its expertise well. Governors have a clear understanding of what needs to be done and this helps them to challenge senior leaders about the standards achieved. They are far more actively involved in school improvement than in the past. Senior leaders particularly value the way in which they monitor teaching and learning by, for example, looking at the quality of work in books. Governors are careful that they keep up to date with training requirements on important matters such as child protection and safeguarding procedures. They have a secure structure in place to check teachers' performance and have tight procedures to make sure that underperformance is tackled robustly. Governors make sure that pupil premium funding is used wisely by, for example, employing more staff to help pupils at risk of falling behind.

## 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>	124358
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	427005

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	408
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter O'Hagan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Bernadette Sims (Executive Headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 December 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 619685
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