

St Mary's Church of England Foundation Primary School

Hampton Road, Stansted, Essex, CM24 8FE

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching has been uneven across the school. As a result, pupils' progress over the last three years has been variable, especially in writing and reading at Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was below national averages in 2013 at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' writing is inconsistent. The presentation of their work needs further improvement, and some struggle with basic grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Opportunities for children to develop their early writing skills are too infrequent in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Teachers have not made effective use of information about how well the pupils are doing to help them plan work which best meets their individual needs.
- Additional adults are not always used effectively to support pupils in classrooms.
- Improvements in the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage have not been fast enough since the last inspection.
- Leaders and managers have not had sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the last inspection. They have not checked what impact additional funding has had on pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils of higher ability often make rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics, especially those in Years 5 and 6. Small-group work helps them to focus on developing their skills and knowledge so they are able to work with minimum support.
- Pupils are very positive about learning, and love taking part in lessons which engage them.
- Pupils behave well around the school and contribute strongly to making this a warm, friendly and cohesive community.
- Parents are positive about the strong sense of community which the school has retained since it has grown in size. They say this ensures that pupils are safe and well looked after.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 17 lessons or part-lessons. Some observations were carried out with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors also made a number of other short visits to classrooms to look at teaching in mixed-age classes, and in the Reception classes.
- Inspectors heard pupils read. They looked at work from each year group in Key Stage 2, much of this with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement planning, and records on behaviour, safety and attendance. They also looked at information on individual pupils' progress and teachers' performance, and records of meetings held by the governing body.
- Inspectors met with pupils, interviewed a sample of staff, and spoke to parents. They also spoke to members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, and the school's commissioned adviser.
- The views of parents were obtained through the school's surveys and the 45 responses to the on-line Parent View survey, as well as one written submission. Written comments from 33 members of staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Brian Netto, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Diana Songer-Hudgell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school. There are ten classes, three of which are taught in mixed-age groups.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small number are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Few of these speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is average. This is additional funding provided for pupils looked after by the local authority and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also average.
- The school provides a breakfast club managed by the governing body. There is also an after-school club, run by an external provider, which is inspected separately.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has moved into a new building as it has increased in size. A deputy headteacher has also been appointed. The school is currently being supported by a local leader of education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To continue to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching, especially in writing, so that pupils make faster progress, by making sure that:
 - every opportunity is provided for all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to practise their early writing skills
 - teachers use information about how well pupils are doing to plan work which better meets the needs of all pupils, especially disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those funded through the pupil premium
 - additional adults provide well-focused support in lessons to pupils who need extra help.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management and the impact leaders and managers have on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by:
 - carefully monitoring and evaluating the way pupil premium funding is allocated and ensuring that the funds are used more effectively to enable those for whom it is intended to catch up with their peers
 - evaluating how effectively the sports fund is promoting healthy and active lifestyles
 - improving the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 fell from above average in 2012 to below average in 2013. Pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar were well below the national average. The progress made by pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 was below expectations in reading and writing.
- Current information shows that most pupils are now making at least good progress in all subjects. Pupils who did not reach the expected level in the screening check at the end of Year 1 are now well supported and have quickly caught up. Pupils are given many opportunities to read and, as a result, they enjoy reading and achieve well.
- Children in the Reception classes join the school with skills typical for their age. Although teaching is inconsistent between the two classes, their achievement is improving. Attainment is broadly average when they enter Year 1.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress. In 2013, pupils' attainment in reading and writing was above national averages, and in mathematics significantly above.
- Achievement in Key Stage 2 is rising quickly. As a result, more-able pupils make accelerated progress. Focused teaching in small groups extends their learning, and builds confidence in their ability to evaluate and correct their own work.
- Pupils funded through the pupil premium are supported well when they are withdrawn for small-group work outside their usual classrooms. However, within normal lessons the support provided is variable and work is not always planned to meet their needs. As a result, they are not making rapid enough progress to catch up with other pupils. In 2013, these pupils were about two years behind other pupils at the end of Year 6. The gap was very much smaller at the end of Year 2.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are given well-targeted support through small-group activities outside the classroom. They make expected progress from their varying starting points. However, work is not always provided at the right level in class.
- The small numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language also make expected progress, as they are also given good support and develop their language skills quickly.
- Progress is quick when teachers have high expectations. Pupils in the mixed-age Year 5 and 6 class made rapid progress in their use of adverbs and adverbial clauses, as questioning was precise, and enabled pupils to use a wide range of imagery in their writing.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- In too many lessons, all pupils are expected to do the same tasks. Work is not set at the right level. In these lessons, the pace of learning slows. Although good support is given to some pupils, this is inconsistent from one class to the next and, as a result, progress is uneven between different groups of pupils.
- Improvements to the way that leaders track the progress of pupils' learning help them to identify gaps in skills and plan ways to provide additional support. However, teachers are not using this

information systematically to set work which meets the different needs of the pupils.

- Opportunities are sometimes missed in the Early Years Foundation Stage to extend children's learning by questioning and guiding them in small groups. There are too few opportunities for some children to practise their early writing skills.
- More-able pupils are particularly well supported so make at least good progress. For example, pupils in Year 2 are grouped so that the more able are given more challenging tasks during the teaching of letters and sounds. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have regular opportunities to develop their writing and reading skills in small groups. Questioning is often probing and helps them to develop more reflective thinking so they can improve their own work.
- Teaching is stronger when pupils are given clear ideas about what they are doing and the steps to take to achieve the goals. Pupils in the mixed-age Year 3 and 4 group made good progress in writing descriptive sentences as they were given regular feedback on what they were doing, and the teacher gave clear examples of good writing.
- Additional adults are used flexibly to support different groups of pupils in the classroom. Many use effective questioning skills to help pupils develop their understanding. However, the support given is inconsistent across the school, and some pupils are not provided with enough help.
- Relationships are very positive. Pupils work cooperatively with their partners and in small groups. They develop their social skills well and some work well on their own.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly. Detailed comments provide useful guidance to pupils about what they do well and what they need to do to improve. However, this is inconsistent across the school, and pupils are not always given time to respond to the guidance.
- The quality of teaching is improving and there is much that is now good or better. Teaching is best when pupils are given challenges which meet their different needs and interests. Pupils in Year 4, for example, used different methods to devise pictograms to represent their collection of evidence, and good use of the interactive whiteboard and other well-devised resources helped them to develop a good understanding of what the data showed them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school. They speak warmly about teachers and other adults, appreciate the after-school sports and cultural activities, and have very positive attitudes towards their learning. This is reflected in their above-average attendance.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is often exemplary. In class, they cooperate well and show care and respect for others. They say that bullying rarely happens and, when it does, the school parliament deals quickly with it. Parents agree that behaviour is good and bullying is rare.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe. Regular visits by the police and fire service, for example, help them understand the need for safety rules.
- Pupils are given good support in difficult times. The school helps them to develop their social skills and listens to their concerns. As a result, their behaviour improves. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity and helps even those whose circumstances make them vulnerable achieve well.

- Pupils enjoy the benefits of the breakfast club, whole-school assemblies and singing together. The opportunities to make regular visits, special focus days, for example on World War II or the Aztecs, and charity fund raising help to foster pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not taken decisive enough action to ensure that changes made within the school have led to improvements. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage remains inconsistent, although achievement has improved. Not all children are given opportunities to extend and develop their skills.
 - Teachers in charge of subjects are having an increasing role in checking how well pupils are doing, for example, in English and mathematics. However, their contributions have not yet shown an impact on improvements in pupils' achievement in other subjects. Senior leaders are working closely with these teachers to guide their further development.
 - Insufficient attention is given to checking how well pupils are doing to help teachers plan to meet their individual needs. This is especially the case in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
 - Some of the pupil premium funding is being used effectively to provide additional support outside the classroom for eligible pupils, but the overall impact of the funding is not sufficient to enable these pupils to catch up. The school does not evaluate the impact this funding has on pupils' achievement.
 - Regular checks on teaching are helping teachers to improve their performance. Staff have opportunities to link with partner schools and observe good practice. They feel well supported, and agree that training and coaching help leaders to manage effectively their performance and pay. Effective work with partner schools ensures that the school has a good capacity to maintain improvements in teaching.
 - The topics and themes ensure that pupils have good experiences of music and sports. Good links with a local secondary school give pupils access to specialist teaching, for example, in physical education and science. The sports fund is used well to buy in expertise from the neighbouring secondary school. This contributes well to the pupils developing healthy lifestyles. Together, they make a strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - The local authority provides support for the leadership and management of the school. This is helping the school to establish an accurate and robust picture of its strengths and weaknesses. This support has included help from another headteacher, and support in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Changes to the governing body in the last 12 months have strengthened its role. Changes to its meetings have also helped governors become better informed and enabled them to challenge school leaders to tackle recent dips in the performance of the school. Governors benefit from regular training, for example in understanding data on how well the pupils are doing in comparison to national expectations. Although they manage finances effectively, they have not yet checked value for money, for example, in how effectively pupil premium funding is helping to improve the achievement of pupils or the primary sports fund is promoting pupils' health and well-being. They make sure that teachers are suitably rewarded under new arrangements for managing their performance. All statutory duties are in place, including those relating to safeguarding, as they conduct regular visits and checks.

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	115269
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	425241

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Corbishley
Headteacher	Christine Tonkins
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2011
Telephone number	01279 812212
Fax number	01279 815958
Email address	admin@st-marys-stansted.essex.sch.uk

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