

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Cobden Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 4BD

Inspection dates 21–22 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:

- Since the last inspection too few pupils have made good progress, and standards therefore are below average at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils have not achieved as well as they could, especially in Key Stage 2, because teaching over time has been inconsistent.
- The information teachers collect about how well pupils are doing is not used well enough to set work at the right levels to challenge all pupils of different abilities, particularly the most able.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not sufficiently stimulating to enable children to fully develop skills of exploration, investigation and independence.
- There are too few opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to practise and develop their mental mathematical skills. This slows the pace at which they can solve mathematical problems.
- Systems for tracking pupils' progress are not yet used effectively enough by all leaders to ensure good progress is made by individual pupils and groups of pupils, including those eligible for free school meals.
- There are not enough opportunities to share good and outstanding practice in teaching and to improve the role of subject leaders in supporting school improvement.

The school has the following strengths:

- This is an improving school. The work of leaders and governors is leading to rapid improvements in pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Teaching and progress in Key Stage 1 are good.
- Teachers give pupils good information on how to improve their work.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They say, and their parents and carers agree, that they enjoy school and feel safe. There is a strong emphasis on the care and welfare of pupils.
- The school works well with a range of professionals beyond the school to support pupils whose circumstances might put them at risk.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 14 teachers, as well as one act of collective worship. Eight lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher, assistant headteachers and the inclusion manager.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff and members of the governing body. In addition, the lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors talked with pupils, listened to them read and observed them at play during break and lunchtimes.
- The inspection team observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on pupils' progress for the previous three years, and pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at the school's checks on how well it is doing and school improvement documentation, planning, assessment information, documentation on the management of teachers' performance, and school policies and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance. The school's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.
- Inspectors took account of 31 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and 24 replies to the staff questionnaire. The views of parents and carers were sought at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

David Webster, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jan Gough

Additional Inspector

Carolyn Steer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage includes two single-age Reception classes. Pupils are taught throughout the rest of the school in mixed-age classes.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average, as is the proportion from ethnic minority groups.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and other groups, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through action is just below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is just below the national average.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress, in 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to accelerate pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics and raise their attainment by the end of Year 6, by ensuring that:
 - teaching is consistently good or better in its impact over time
 - the most able pupils are always given work that challenges them and enables them to progress more rapidly
 - teachers make good use of assessment information to further close attainment and progress gaps between pupils, including gaps between those known to be eligible for free school meals and others
 - provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides more opportunities for children to develop their skills of exploration, investigation and independence.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - improving the skills of all leaders in using the systems for tracking pupils' progress effectively so individual pupils and groups of pupils are provided with timely, targeted support to accelerate their progress to good
 - improving the role of subject leaders in supporting school improvement, including measuring the progress made by pupils and taking swift action to raise achievement in their area of responsibility
 - ensuring that pupils are provided with more opportunities across subjects to secure their ability in mental mathematics so that they solve mathematical problems more accurately and at a quicker pace
 - ensuring more opportunities for good and outstanding practice in teaching to be shared.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement is not good because pupils, particularly the most able, have not made good progress over time as teaching has not been consistently good. In addition, some weaker teaching in lower Key Stage 2 over time left some pupils with gaps in their learning. However, this is now being addressed and older pupils in Key Stage 2 are now benefiting from some stronger teaching. The school's own data and work in pupils' books show that standards, which had been below average, are rising and that progress is accelerating rapidly. This is particularly evident in reading due to the school's focus on developing literacy, which has brought about rapid improvement in pupils' progress. Current indications are that pupils are on track to achieve standards above expectations in writing and mathematics. Similar acceleration of progress is also evident lower down Key Stage 2.
- Standards reached at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average. Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2012 and 2013, Year 1 pupils achieved above national expectations in a check of their understanding of letters and the sounds they make (phonics), due to good teaching and use of a structured scheme. Across the school, pupils have good attitudes to reading and read frequently.
- Children join the school with skills and knowledge which are generally those typically expected for their age. They make steady progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but progress is not yet good because when they initiate their own learning the provision available is not always sufficiently stimulating to enable the children to fully develop their skills of exploration, investigation and independence.
- School assessment data show the proportions of pupils making and exceeding their expected levels of progress are increasing across the school. This is because of the school's improved systems to track underachievement and its concerted effort to improve the quality of teaching.
- Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are well supported. The school accurately identifies their specific individual learning needs. Specialist and additional teaching is ensuring that these pupils are increasing their rates of progress. This helps them keep up with their classmates, demonstrating the school's commitment to ensuring every pupil has equal opportunity.
- In 2013 the small number of Year 6 pupils supported by the pupil premium funding attained as well as their classmates in mathematics, but were approximately five terms behind them in reading and over two terms behind in writing. The school's assessment information shows that this gap is being quickly closed and that the progress of pupils eligible for free school meals in Year 6 is above that of other pupils because of extra support to develop their communication, literacy and mathematical skills.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good or better. Some weak teaching over time has had a negative impact on the achievement of pupils. However, this issue is now being resolved, strengthening the quality of teaching overall. The school's records, the improvement in achievement and inspection observations of a significant amount of good or better teaching, indicate that the quality of teaching is improving rapidly. However, improvements are not yet sufficiently well embedded to ensure that the learning of all groups of pupils is consistently good across year groups.
- Where teaching requires improvement, pupils make only adequate progress. Although most teachers know the abilities of the pupils well, some are unaware of what pupils, and especially the more able, can achieve. Consequently, pupils are not stretched as much as possible and their progress is not rapid enough. For example, a mathematics lesson was observed where work was not sufficiently matched to pupils' differing abilities.
- In some mathematics lessons pupils demonstrated a good understanding of how to work out

mathematical problems but their insecure mental mathematics skills led to errors which slowed their pace of learning.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are well cared for and, in the thoroughly planned lessons that adults lead, they learn to follow instructions which guide them well in their next steps in learning, are fully engaged, and get on happily with one another. However, children do not make consistently good progress in all areas of learning because they do not have enough opportunities to develop their investigation and problem-solving skills.
- The school has recently implemented tracking and monitoring procedures which are beginning to be used more effectively to support pupils who fall behind, particularly for those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. As a result, vulnerable pupils, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium, along with pupils from the various minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language, make progress which is at least in line with their peers and sometimes above. However, progress is not yet consistently good across all year groups.
- Reading is taught effectively. Teaching of phonics skills helps pupils to read unfamiliar words and is given high importance throughout the school. Teachers actively encourage pupils to read at home for pleasure as well as for purpose.
- When teaching is good or better, pupils learn well and make good progress. Teachers ensure tasks are hard enough, interesting and fun, and encourage pupils to work independently and cooperatively. As a result, pupils respond well and provide support for each other in how to improve. For example, in a well-planned Year 5/6 English lesson all pupils made rapid progress, working with enjoyment and high levels of motivation in response to the challenge of sustained independent writing in a genre of their choice.
- Feedback from teachers to pupils about their work has improved significantly. Throughout the school teachers provide clear guidance for pupils to reach the next steps in their learning. Pupils have good opportunities to respond and their work improves as a result.
- In the lessons seen, teaching assistants made a mostly effective contribution to supporting the learning of individuals or groups of pupils who needed additional help.
- Improved teaching of literacy and numeracy, including when part of work in other subjects, has led to improvements in the standards of pupils' written and mathematics work, which is evident in their books.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are eager to learn. Behaviour in lessons and attitudes to learning are good. Pupils settle quickly to work and support each other with their learning. Pupils' good behaviour over time and the positive relationships they have with each other and with the staff contribute well to the improvements made in their rates of progress.
- Pupils are very polite and helpful. Behaviour was good during the inspection and school records show that this is typical. Pupils report that they confidently place their trust in the adults who care for them and appreciate the many opportunities available to express any worries they may have. They say that incidents of bullying and all forms of harassment are rare and that, if they occur, they are dealt with swiftly and appropriately by teachers. These views were supported by the parents and carers who responded to the Parent View questionnaire.
- Pupils say they feel safe and enjoy school, and parents and carers strongly agree. Through the school's curriculum and a range of assembly themes pupils are guided well so that they have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy.
- Attendance is improving due to the school's firm stance on pupil absence and is currently closer to the national average than at the last inspection.
- Behaviour and safety are not outstanding because when learning activities fail to motivate or interest them, a few pupils do not fully engage in the tasks which have been provided.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because there is still not enough good and outstanding teaching.
- There is insufficient rigour in the use of the school's systems for checking that good progress is being made by individual pupils and groups of pupils. Leaders' checks on teaching have not always been sharply focused enough on the quality of learning and progress made in lessons. This information, as well as that from pupils' work and data collected on their progress over time, has not always been accurately aligned to give a clear enough picture of how well pupils are doing. However, recently introduced systems for checking and tracking progress have strengthened staff understanding of how well pupils progress and raised expectations of what they can achieve.
- Subject leaders play an increasing role in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Their role in school improvement requires further development, including that of measuring the progress made by pupils and taking swift action to raise achievement in their areas of responsibility.
- Led by a determined headteacher, the school is clear about what it needs to do to improve. She has established a strong team who are behind her drive to raise standards and accelerate progress. The school's views of its own performance is accurate and leaders have put appropriate priorities in place since the last inspection which have resulted in improvements to achievement and the quality of teaching. All this demonstrates the school's capacity for improvement.
- Staff are supported by a programme of ongoing training and are increasingly being held to account for the progress of pupils in their care. Teachers are set targets as part of the annual procedures for reviewing their performance, which are linked to raising pupils' achievement, and success is linked to promotion up the pay scale. However, there is further scope for the sharing of good and outstanding practice between staff.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and pupils enjoy the range of visits and additional activities that are provided.
- The new primary school sports funding has increased pupils' participation in physical education and sport and is contributing well to developing better physical well-being for pupils.
- The school's partnerships with other organisations are effective. They include strong links with outside agencies such as social care and health services which reflect the school's caring ethos, and active engagement with other schools and organisations to improve teaching. The school develops its links with parents and carers through a range of activities.
- The local authority holds an accurate view of the school's position and has provided high levels of support to help bring about improvements, such as improved progress in mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a clear overview of how well the school is performing, including how it compares to other schools nationally, because its members have developed their skills through training and accurately review data about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. They have taken appropriate steps to challenge underperformance in teaching, resulting in changes in staff, and are accurately focused on the appropriate issues to improve the school. Governors ask challenging questions and increasingly hold the school to account for its performance. They have a good understanding of how pupil premium funding is spent and the difference this makes to pupils' achievement. They know how the new sports funding is being allocated and its impact on improving the school's provision and outcomes for its pupils. Governors ensure that finances are managed well, that safeguarding requirements are met and that pupils are kept safe.

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	126042
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	426520

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	275
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Dargen-Murphy
Headteacher	Cecilia Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2012
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