

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Cross Street, Chesterfield, S40 4ST

Inspection dates 5–6 December 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| 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 | | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children in the Reception class enjoy a good start to their education due to good teaching and a caring approach of staff. They learn well and so are ready for Year 1.
- Attainment has risen since 2012 and is above average across Key Stages 1 and 2. Current data shows standards are continuing to rise quickly, especially in mathematics and writing.
- There is a positive climate for learning in the school and the quality of teaching is typically good, with some outstanding teaching, which enables pupils to learn successfully and achieve well.
- Teachers use assessment well to match work to pupils' abilities and challenge them.
- Pupils behave well around school and in lessons. They feel safe in school, get on well with each other and have a positive attitude to learning.
- The management of teaching and learning is effective. Leaders, managers and governors have successfully improved teaching by rigorous checking, well-targeted training, support and guidance, and have had a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- The governing body provides good support and appropriate challenge to school leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Guidance in pupils' marked work is not always precise and teachers do not check that pupils follow the advice they have been given.
- Too few more-able pupils reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply and develop their writing skills fully across all subjects.
- Not enough time is devoted to the arts, history and geography.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons including five joint observations and work scrutiny with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and walks around the school to check the quality of what is provided for pupils.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' exercise books.
- They held discussions with pupils, parents, the Chair of the Governing Body, school staff, including those with responsibilities for subjects and the local authority school development partner.
- Inspectors took account of the 113 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and examined a range of documentation including the school's own record of pupils' current progress, records from the observation of lessons, displays of pupils' work and school improvement planning. They also considered documentation in relation to behaviour, attendance, child protection and safeguarding.
- Inspectors analysed the 30 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Lindsay Hall, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Sara Storer | Additional Inspector |
| Mark Cordell | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- Currently, a below-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. The pupil premium is the additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and children with a parent in the armed services.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes in staffing, including the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding and thereby build on the good achievement and improving standards in the school by making sure that:
 - more-able pupils are set work that enables them to reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1
 - pupils are given precise guidance about how to improve their work in all subjects and that teachers check that they respond to this advice
 - pupils' handwriting improves across the school.
- Enrich the curriculum across the school by:
 - making sure that pupils are given more chances to write at length across a wider range of subjects
 - increasing the proportion of taught time given to the arts, history and geography.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start at the school with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. They settle into the Reception classes quickly, are keen to learn, play together well and are well behaved. By the end of Reception, almost all children are busy and determined learners and many are exceeding the levels of development expected for their age.
- The school has adopted a systematic approach to teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make) and this is having a very positive impact on developing pupils' reading skills. In the Year 1 phonic reading check, pupils' attainment in the phonics screening check was broadly in line with what pupils achieved nationally.
- Pupils read fluently. They show a love of reading and talk with enthusiasm about the books they read at home and in lessons.
- Pupils make good progress across Key Stage 1. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 has risen steadily since 2011 for most groups of pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language. The most recent national assessments show that pupils reached standards in reading, writing and mathematics that were above average.
- A smaller proportion of more-able pupils than nationally reached the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1. The school has tackled this underperformance. With raised teacher expectation and greater pupil challenge, current data and scrutiny of pupils' work indicate a sharp rise in the proportion of pupils who are on course to achieve the higher level by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils continue to make good progress and by the time they leave Year 6 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. The school's concerted action over the last year in raising standards further in writing and mathematics is evident in the work of current Year 6 pupils, who are on track to exceed national averages for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- By Year 6, more-able pupils achieve well. Their progress across all subjects accelerates across Key Stage 2, but particularly in mathematics, where the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level is well above average.
- While, by the end of Year 6, the attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium is the same as their peers in mathematics, for some, it lagged behind that of their peers in reading and writing. The school has addressed this issue to close the gap through regular assistance closely matched to their abilities and an improved frequency of intervention sessions. Consequently, progress has accelerated and gaps in reading and writing, although two terms behind the rest of their year group, are closing rapidly.
- The school has used its pupil premium funding wisely to introduce a range of measures, such as additional staffing, precision teaching in small groups, resources to support reading, writing and mathematics and a team of 'Guardian Angels' who support pupils' well-being and the appointment of a pastoral worker, which in turn promotes positive learning for individual pupils.
- The special educational needs coordinator has been highly influential in ensuring good support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those arriving from other schools. The school identified a gap between their attainment and levels nationally. Standards

have risen sharply over the past year due to the school's well-targeted actions to support learning, further reflecting the school's effective commitment to treating and supporting all pupils equally.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good overall with some examples of outstanding teaching. A scrutiny of work in pupils' books and the school's records of the checks made on teaching indicate that teaching is typically good and improving.
- Teachers have excellent relationships with their pupils and expectations are high. Teachers make good use of praise and encouragement to build confidence and to create a positive atmosphere for learning.
- Literacy and numeracy are taught particularly well. There is some outstanding teaching in these subjects, where pupils are very well motivated and they get through a lot of work in lessons.
- The best teaching engages and motivates pupils well. These lessons are well planned, move along at a good pace and explanations by the teachers are clear. Questioning is highly effective and pupils' answers are challenged to extend their learning.
- A minority of lessons require improvement, especially where pupils are not given enough time to complete their work.
- The team of skilled teaching assistants are well deployed, providing additional support for groups of pupils, such as disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Teaching is improving further as a result of staff training. Teachers' expertise and subject knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics has been strengthened and, as a result, teachers provide pupils with work that is particularly well suited to their different learning needs and abilities.
- Marking of work in pupils' books is carried out regularly and teachers use this assessment information to plan lessons. Teachers mostly provide helpful comments and this ensures that pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve. This is stronger in English and mathematics than in other subjects. Teachers do not always make sure that pupils follow the advice they are given through marking.
- While literacy, particularly writing, is taught successfully, samples of pupils' work show that pupils have fewer opportunities to write at length in all subjects and teachers do not maintain such high expectations with regard to pupils' handwriting.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy learning and are attentive and work hard in the classroom. Their positive attitudes have a good impact on the progress they make.
- The school's behaviour records show that around school, on the playground and in the dining hall behaviour is good and the incidents recorded are only minor ones which are dealt with effectively. The recent appointment of the pastoral worker has been supportive in encouraging pupils to reflect on any challenging behaviour and promotes good social and emotional

development.

- Pupils relate positively to each other and to visitors. They are invariably polite, well-mannered and respectful to adults and are mindful of one another.
- Lesson observations show that teachers manage pupils' behaviour consistently well. In some of the lessons that require improvement pupils are allowed to lose concentration and this slows learning.
- School is a very calm and orderly place and pupils say they are well cared for, feel safe and that incidents of bullying are rare. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying and of how to stay safe in different situations. They are knowledgeable about internet safety.
- Punctuality is good and attendance is high. The school has been working successfully to raise awareness about the importance of good attendance and established procedures are in place to follow up any absence.
- Pupils make good use of opportunities outside of lesson time. Lunch-time and after-school clubs are well attended, particularly sports clubs which contribute to pupils' physical well-being.

The leadership and management are good

- Under the strong and committed leadership of the headteacher, governors and all staff continuously and relentlessly strive for further improvement and the school continues to build on strengths seen at the previous inspection.
- The senior leadership team have worked hard to lead the improvements in literacy and numeracy and the impact of subject leaders is improving. With the recent introduction of the 'challenge curriculum' they are now taking the lead in developing the areas for which they are responsible. Staff feel supported by senior leaders, but also the arrangements for managing their performance holds them rigorously to account.
- The school's analysis of its own work is extremely thorough and accurate. Leaders have identified precise priorities for improvement and are continually reviewing the impact of their actions to move the school forward.
- The quality of teaching is monitored very carefully and staff receive high-quality training, closely matched to their needs. The well-planned approach to training and professional development includes making use of the proven skills already evident in the school. As a result teaching is continually improving and standards are rising across the school. The school works well with other schools to improve teaching.
- The curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs. It develops their good numeracy and literacy skills and supports their spiritual, moral social and cultural development particularly well. It has recently been reviewed and changes to embrace the 'Challenge Curriculum' are being introduced. Not enough time is allocated to the arts, history and geography so pupils can apply their skills and deepen their knowledge further.
- Extra funds to support physical education have been used to provide specialist teaching of sport and a wide range of lunch-time and after-school sports activities which are very well attended.
- Safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements. All staff are well trained and completely aware

of child protection and risk assessment procedures.

- The school receives good support from the local authority. It has provided a suitable balance of challenge and support to help the school improve.
- Senior leaders ensure that equal opportunities are promoted well in the school, particularly in relation to the different groups of pupils in the school. The school has effective systems in place to track both the progress and personal development of individuals and groups of pupils. Information on pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour is analysed precisely so that senior leaders have a full view of how pupils are performing throughout the year. Support is quickly provided to pupils who might be falling behind.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a very clear understanding of the school. Governors understand and question the school's data about pupils' progress and know how well pupils are doing. They have been active in determining priorities for improvement and moving the school forward. Governors recognise how each member of staff has to meet the teaching standards and is paid according to their experience and performance. The governing body provides strong support and appropriate challenge in equal measure. Governors understand how the pupil premium and sports funding are allocated and monitor the impact of this funding on pupils' achievement and well-being. They are trained well so that the school meets its statutory safeguarding requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 112898 |
| Local authority | Derbyshire |
| Inspection number | 425076 |

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

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| 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 | 445 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Paul McGinley |
| Headteacher | Lindsey Apps |
| Date of previous school inspection | 6 October 2008 |
| Telephone number | 01246 232170 |
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