

# St Mary's Church of England Primary School and Nursery

Old Road, Writhlington, Radstock, BA3 3NG

**Inspection dates** 11–12 February 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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

- Due to effective teaching and an imaginative curriculum, all groups of pupils achieve well.
- Pupils are enthusiastic learners and their good behaviour and positive attitudes contribute much to the good progress made by each year group.
- Parents hold the school in high regard and are confident that their children are cherished and kept safe. One parent, reflecting the majority view, said, 'I could not wish for a better education for my children.'
- Every pupil's progress is closely tracked, so anyone falling behind is spotted quickly.
- Regular checks are made on the quality of teaching. Successful methods are shared and staff benefit from a wide range of additional training.
- The executive headteacher and deputy headteacher work in close partnership and play a central role in the unrelenting drive to ensure all pupils do as well as they can.
- Governors provide insightful guidance and support. They keep a close eye on how well pupils are doing and help to ensure that funding is used effectively.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most able pupils do not make the same progress in writing as they do in reading.
- Pupils' skills in mental arithmetic are inconsistent, which means pupils sometimes lack confidence when tackling mathematical problems.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 15 lessons of which six were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Pupils' behaviour in the playground and at lunchtime was also evaluated.
- Discussions were held with pupils, three members of the governing body, the headteacher, staff, the parish vicar and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector observed many aspects of the school's work, including the support for pupils who need extra help. He examined pupils' work in their books and on classroom and corridor wall displays, and heard groups of pupils read.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents including plans for the school's future development, lesson plans, the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe, pupils' attendance records, minutes of governing body meetings, records of how pupils' learning is monitored and records of how the quality of teaching is checked.
- The views of parents were taken into account, including those expressed in the 14 responses to the online Parent View survey and in discussions with the inspector at the beginning of the school day.
- Staff views were taken into consideration by looking at 13 returned questionnaires and through discussions with several members of staff.

## Inspection team

Rob Crompton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than average. In September 2011, the private nursery sharing the school campus became part of the school.
- Around 90% of pupils have a White British heritage, with the remainder from minority ethnic groups. 96% of pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium, is about twice the national average. (The pupil premium provides additional funding for children who are looked after, children of parents serving in the armed forces and for those 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 above the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is broadly average. These needs relate mainly to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties or speech, language and communication problems.
- There are five classes: Nursery; Reception and Year 1; Years 1 and 2; Years 3 and 4; and Years 5 and 6.
- The school did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in 2013.
- The school operates in collaboration with the nearby Farrington Gurney Primary School, and shares the same executive headteacher.

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

- Accelerate the progress made by the most able pupils in writing so that it more closely matches the progress they make in reading by:
  - encouraging them to use their good skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar routinely in their day-to-day written work
  - developing their skills in expressing ideas orally in order to develop their vocabulary and improve their confidence in writing.
- Improve pupils' recall of basic number facts and teach pupils quick methods of calculation to enhance their skills in solving mathematical problems.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- When children enter the Nursery, their social, language and number skills are generally below, and sometimes well below, the levels expected for their age. They make good progress through the Nursery and Reception classes. The proportion reaching a good level of development varies from year to year due to the very small number of children involved.
- Comparing pupils' achievement with national averages does not provide a reliable measure of the school's performance, again due to the small numbers in each year group. For example, one pupil's attainment in Year 6 can skew the outcomes from well above to well below the national average.
- From generally low starting points, pupils usually make good progress, reaching broadly average levels in reading, writing and mathematics by Year 6. There was a dip in 2013 when the government floor standards were not met due to the particular characteristics of the year group.
- Effective, systematic teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) means pupils gain increasing confidence in reading unfamiliar words and are progressively accurate in spelling. Pupils in Year 1 are making good headway and are on track to reach the expected levels in the Year 1 phonics screening.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and writing through the school. By Year 6, the most able pupils generally reach the higher levels in reading, routinely tackling complex passages containing mature vocabulary with fluency and understanding. Their progress in writing is slower. Although they gain good skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar, they do not routinely use these skills in their day-to-day written work.
- Due to effective teaching, pupils build up their basic numeracy skills progressively as they move through Years 1 and 2. They gain confidence in using these skills through practical activities, such as calculating change in the classroom shop.
- Through Years 3 to 6, pupils learn to tackle mathematical problems systematically and accurately. For some pupils, however, solving problems is a little laborious as they do not have quick recall of number facts and relationships, for example  $63+37=100$ . Some use rather long-winded methods of calculation, rather than shorter methods, which also slow them up.
- The school's firm commitment to promoting equality of opportunity, fostering good relations and tackling discrimination is seen in how well the particular traits, interests and achievements of every individual pupil are well known and built on.
  - Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress due to effective support, both within lessons and during small-group sessions.
  - The rate of achievement of pupils entitled to free school meals varies greatly, again due to small numbers. Some of these pupils are among the higher achievers and others have additional needs. In 2012 and 2013, about half of the Year 6 pupils were entitled to free school meals, and in both years their performance in English and mathematics broadly matched that of all pupils in the year group.
  - The most able pupils are continuously challenged to build well on their starting points. They generally reach above average levels of attainment, although their achievement in writing tends to be lower than in reading and mathematics.
  - There are no particular trends in the achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups.

### The quality of teaching is good

- In the Nursery and Reception classes, staff quickly build warm relationships with children. A strong focus on personal development means that children became increasingly confident in getting along with one another and the adults. Staff take every opportunity to engage children in conversations and extend their learning as they explore and learn from the wide variety of stimulating practical activities, both indoors and outside.

- Children are purposefully occupied as soon as they enter the Reception classroom. The teacher expertly guides their learning through the day, striking an effective balance between focused sessions led by an adult and time for children to follow their own interests. 'Come and look at my owl mask,' and 'Look at our space station' were among the many appeals they made to show what they were doing.
- Teaching across the school is typically good and sometimes outstanding. Consistent strengths include the way teachers plan work at the right level to challenge all pupils in the mixed-age classes. Teachers are adept at stimulating and sustaining pupils' engagement and pupils are kept on their toes through skilful questioning.
- Teachers frequently elicit pupils' ideas about what makes good work. This means pupils gain a clear idea about what is expected and how to improve. Pupils in the Years 3/4 class, for example, when asked about descriptive writing, suggested, 'Use a drop-in clause,' and 'Include a comma string.' Precise feedback during lessons and from teachers' detailed written comments also contribute to pupils' good progress.
- Support staff take the initiative during lessons and are quick to spot where pupils need extra help. They also provide sensitive and tailored support outside the classroom.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers recognise that even the most fluent readers sometimes find difficulty communicating their ideas orally when thinking about what they will write. They often spend time helping pupils to express their ideas and test out sentence structure and vocabulary orally before writing; this has a positive effect on their subsequent work.
- Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to encourage pupils, particularly the most able, to use in their general written work the spelling, punctuation and grammar skills they demonstrate when doing specific work on these skills.

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

- Pupils' behaviour is good and pupils try their best in lessons. Their positive attitude to learning is an important factor in the good progress they make. They are attentive in lessons, very willing to contribute ideas and respect their classmates' views.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered, and show genuine concern and care for one another. They generally play very happily together at break and lunch times. Occasionally, when inclement weather means they have limited space and their activities overlap, some pupils playing football, chase and wielding tennis racquets do not show their usual consideration for one another.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms it can take, such as cyber bullying and persistent name calling or taunting. They say that there is no bullying in the school, but are confident that any incidents would be quickly resolved. They understand the school's behaviour policy well and the boundaries that are set. They understand how to keep themselves safe, including when they are using the internet.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Safeguarding procedures, such as the safe recruitment of staff, are fully established and adhered to methodically. Pupils' safety and welfare are top priorities and the school promotes healthy lifestyles very well. The premises are very secure. Pupils say that they feel safe and parents spoken to, or contributing to the Parent View website, are very confident that their children are safe in school.
- Teachers and other adults are trained in following child protection guidelines. Health and safety risks of school activities are regularly assessed, for example when going on trips.

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

- The school leadership successfully creates a culture in which core values, including high quality teaching and good behaviour, are shared. Leaders set high expectations for the performance of staff and keep a watchful eye on pupils' progress. Extensive monitoring and analysis enable the school to devise well-focused plans. Innovations are implemented with precision and managed thoroughly. As a result, the quality of teaching is at least good and leaders are taking effective

steps to drive up the quality of teaching still further.

- Staff benefit from the close collaboration with Farrington Gurney Primary School, for example, from regularly sharing ideas, planning together and joint training. The local authority supports the school effectively and has every confidence in the school leadership in driving further improvement.
- The rich curriculum contributes significantly to pupils' academic and personal development. Evolving themes draw on topical and seasonal events, for example the Winter Olympics and the recent flooding in the nearby Somerset Levels. Such topics promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The extensive grounds, which include an outdoor classroom, wild area and sensory garden, are used very effectively, particularly in promoting pupils' spiritual development and their understanding of the natural world.
- Additional weekly activities have been introduced using the extra funding for sports, and the school is monitoring the impact of these on pupils' enthusiasm and participation rates in physical activities. All staff and pupils, and many parents take part in walking, jogging or running a 'golden mile' each Friday. This contributes to the strong family atmosphere that is much appreciated by parents.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have a sharp awareness of how assessment information is used to evaluate pupils' performance and they support school leaders in ensuring that good teaching is suitably rewarded. They seek assurances that pupil premium funding is used effectively and are regularly updated on how different groups of pupils are getting on, including those eligible for free school meals. Individual governors take responsibility for keeping an eye on each goal in the school development plan. They gain insights through visits during the day when they observe and talk to pupils, and discuss things with staff, and subsequently write summaries for other governors. Governors participate in regular training and keep their effectiveness under review. Safeguarding arrangements fully meet statutory requirements.

## 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>	109212
<b>Local authority</b>	Bath and North East Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	432027

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 controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	91
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Frances Butt
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sue Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25–26 May 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01761 434548
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