

St Mary's CofE (VC) Primary School

Queen Street, Kingswinford, DY6 7AQ

Inspection dates

12–13 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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.

- The headteacher is a highly effective leader, giving high priority to supporting and training staff in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Most pupils currently at school are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is rarely less than good. Teachers provide challenging work for pupils of all abilities, including the most able, that stimulate pupils' imagination.
- The school staff and pupils develop all aspects of their lives through a highly motivating range of spiritual, moral, social, and cultural activities. This contributes to a calm and positive atmosphere for learning.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught well and, as a result, make a good start to their learning and are well prepared for Key Stage 1.
- Pupils are extremely polite, well behaved, and considerate to each other and they feel safe in school. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good and make a positive contribution to the good progress they make.
- Governors know the school well and are fully aware of its strengths and areas for development. They take their responsibilities very seriously and ask challenging questions of senior leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in mathematics is not as strong in Key Stage 2 as it is in writing or reading.
- Marking does not consistently offer pupils' sufficient guidance on how to improve their work, and not enough time is provided for them to reflect on and improve their learning.
- Although pupils write well and standards in writing are above average, sometimes their handwriting and presentation need further improvement.
- Some subject leaders and responsibility holders are not contributing sufficiently to checking and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons or parts of lessons, including three which were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break time and at lunchtime, both inside the school, in the playground and on the field. They listened to a sample of pupils read from Years 2, 3 and 5.
- Pupils in Year 6 were absent during the inspection at their residential visit in Ross-on-Wye. The lead inspector visited them during the first evening of the inspection.
- Discussions were held with a group of pupils from Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 6 who were on their residential visit, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, the school improvement partner, the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff. Inspectors spoke to a number of parents at the school gate and others who were attending the parents' forum, which is a meeting of governors with parents that was held in school during the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of 24 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors were unable to take into account the views of parents who had responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as Ofsted was investigating unusual activity regarding the responses for this school. The lead inspector asked the school to issue a questionnaire to parents with the same questions as the online survey. Fifty-nine responses to the school questionnaire were received and examined.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan; pupils' workbooks; external moderators' reports of assessment; documents relating to the management of teachers' performance; plans for supporting pupils who have special educational needs; and minutes of the meetings of the governing body. They also reviewed the standards pupils have achieved over time and the school's information about pupils' current progress.

Inspection team

Terrance Mortimer, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Wendy Hanrahan

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of the pupils are White British and there is a very small minority of pupils from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is extra government funding for particular groups, including pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children, is around the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special needs supported through school action is well below average, and the proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has a breakfast club and after-school clubs on site each day, which are run privately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the overall quality of teaching to enable pupils to progress at an even faster pace, especially in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that teachers mark pupils' work consistently, making it clear how pupils can improve their work, and by giving them the time to do so
 - consistently applying the handwriting and presentation policy in all aspects of work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management and its impact on achievement by:
 - enabling subject and phase leaders to develop shared expertise in analysis and evaluation of teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The current attainment of pupils in Year 6 shows a big improvement over 2013, especially in mathematics, and is above average. The school's progress information and inspection observations show that pupils are making good progress in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and that progress and attainment are accelerating rapidly in all subjects, especially in Years 4, 5 and 6. Pupils, especially the most able, write confidently, read well and are developing a secure understanding of the skills required to succeed in English and mathematics.
- Children begin Early Years Foundation Stage, at age three, with skills and understanding that are below those typically expected for their age. Learning and progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good so that, by the time they enter Key Stage 1, standards are broadly in line with those expected in most areas of learning, though below in language skills.
- In Years 1 and 2, pupils make expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards by the end of Year 2 are average overall. Standards in reading and mathematics are slightly better than in writing. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the check on their knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics) at the end of Year 1 was broadly average.
- The headteacher has made sure that teachers assess the standards pupils reach in Year 2 accurately and at the correct levels. This has had a positive impact on accelerating the progress of pupils in Year 3 because teachers have a more accurate understanding of pupils' starting points on entry to Key Stage 2 and aim to speed pupils' progress from that point.
- Pupils in Year 6 in 2013 made good progress across Key Stage 2 in writing. Progress required improvement in reading, and was poor in mathematics. The reasons for this were addressed through the management of teachers' performance by the end of September 2013. The school's own reliable progress data show that pupils currently in Year 6 have made at least good progress and often better in all subjects from the end of Year 4, and their attainment is rising further.
- Current school data show that progress in mathematics is now as good as in writing and has improved even more in reading. This is mainly due to the sharp school focus, since September 2013, on improving pupils' mathematical skills. The school now provides more opportunities for pupils to apply their skills through solving problems and targeted intervention to support pupils who have fallen behind in both reading and mathematics.
- Although pupils do well in writing, sometimes untidy handwriting and poor presentation do not reflect their otherwise good attitudes and achievement.
- Attainment of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding in 2013 was two terms behind that of other pupils in Year 6 in reading, over a year behind in writing, but was a term ahead in mathematics. The attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium in the current Year 6 has been rising steadily for the last two years and it is now similar to that of their peers in English and mathematics throughout the school so that there are no gaps.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to that of their classmates. Current school data show that, where there is a gap between the attainment of these pupils and that of others, it is narrowing quickly.

- Standards in physical education are good due to the effective use made of the primary sport funding to employ expert outside teachers. Children make good progress in their physical, personal and emotional development as they participate in their physical education lessons with the sports coach. In Key Stages 1 and 2, all pupils participate in dance, gymnastics and swimming as part of their physical education.

The quality of teaching

is good

- In the Nursery and Reception classes, children make good progress because of effective teaching and the well-planned activities. Children progress well when they explore and learn on their own. There is a strong emphasis on developing children's language skills, extending their vocabulary and reinforcing their understanding of letters and the sounds they make.
- Where the teaching in lessons is most effective, teachers demonstrate high expectations and engage pupils' interest through exciting lessons. For example, good use was made of pupils' natural curiosity to help pupils understand onomatopoeia and which alliterations they could use to construct a poem about an eagle. Pupils were intrigued by the words, and made excellent progress in their use of adjectives, alliteration and onomatopoeia. However, the level of challenge in some lessons is not always sufficient for the most able pupils.
- Teachers use information about pupils' abilities and progress effectively in their planning. Pupils have clear targets for improving their learning, and receive regular homework. Teachers plan lessons that motivate and engage pupils in their learning. As a result, pupils enjoy lessons, have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. Pupils say, 'Teachers make lessons fun and easy to remember.'
- Teachers successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and create a positive learning atmosphere. In lessons, teachers successfully promote qualities such as cooperation, respect for others and reflection. By promoting good relationships and managing behaviour effectively, staff ensure that classrooms are calm, encouraging places to learn and pupils are not afraid to 'have a go'. Displays are vibrant and 'working walls' support pupils in their skills in checking their work.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to help pupils who need extra support either in lessons, individually, or in small groups. Such extra well-targeted support ensures these pupils make the same progress as others in school.
- Essential reading skills are taught effectively through a well-structured programme. Pupils enjoy reading and read widely at home and in school. Guided-reading sessions, where a group of pupils study the same book together with their teacher, have helped pupils improve their reading skills, especially their understanding of the text. For example, pupils using a non-fiction text about supporting wildlife carried out their lesson in the wildlife garden area. This helped them to use observation skills and staff used skilful questions to deepen pupils' understanding of vocabulary.
- In mathematics lessons, pupils are encouraged to think for themselves in order to develop their problem-solving skills based on a secure understanding of basic mathematical facts. In a mathematics lesson in Year 2, for example, pupils were deciding which the most common number was and which number was not possible to achieve when rolling two dice. However, the most able pupils achieved this quickly and then had to wait to be given a further challenge. This slowed their learning.

- Teachers have introduced new initiatives to improve the quality of pupils' writing. They encourage the use of new vocabulary and help demonstrate how to create interesting sentences which can form part of a longer story. They are not always as vigilant as they might be in demanding high-quality presentation of pupils' work nor is the teaching of joined-up script as strong as it might be.
- Work in pupils' books displays clear progress showing that teaching has improved over time. It is marked more consistently in English than mathematics. However, comments do not always indicate the next steps to be taken in pupils' learning or challenge the most able pupils. This results in pupils not being clear about how to improve their work. In addition, time is not always provided for pupils to reflect on the teachers' comments or to correct their work once it has been marked.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They get on well together. Strong moral values and respect for others are promoted successfully and pupils act accordingly around school.
- Pupils are proud of their school and greatly enjoy learning within the caring environment created by the headteacher and her staff. There is a very calm, orderly and inclusive atmosphere.
- Pupils' behaviour in and outside lessons is good. They are polite and treat each other in a caring way. This was seen in the dining room where older pupils were helping younger pupils.
- Pupils show respect for and form good relationships with each other and with staff. As a result, they feel happy and enjoy being in school. A comment from a pupil in Year 6 reflects how pupils feel, 'Everyone is welcome here, no matter who you are.' This is a positive example of how well the school seeks to eliminate discrimination.
- Pupils take their roles as school councillors and buddies seriously. Opportunities to take on such responsibilities provide purposeful ways to extend pupils' moral and social development.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel extremely safe in school due to the good care and attention they receive from all the adults in school. They know how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including when using the internet. Pupils say that they are confident to seek help, should they need it, from any adult in school. Parents and staff strongly support the fact that pupils are safe in school.
- Pupils, in discussions with inspectors, demonstrated a secure understanding of what is meant by bullying and this included name-calling and physical threats. They said there were no bullying or racist comments in school.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is built into every lesson. As a consequence, pupils know the difference between right and wrong and have a good understanding of cultures other than their own.
- Recently, attendance has improved to average. Punctuality has also improved.
- The breakfast club has a positive impact on pupils' learning. It provides a healthy breakfast and opportunities for pupils to socialise with their friends and take part in interesting activities.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has built a strong leadership team which is driving forward improvement. She has been well supported by the deputy headteacher and the much-improved governing body.
- A rigorous audit of the school has been carried out by the headteacher who is very aware of its strengths and of the areas needing development. Planning for improvement is closely linked to aspects that are not yet outstanding and is based on accurate data.
- The headteacher challenges inadequate performance which has resulted in improving the quality of teaching. Disappointing results at the end of Year 6 in 2013 were the result of previously weak teaching. Most notably, through established procedures to manage teachers' performance, she has tackled underperformance in teaching so that standards are rising and the school is back on course not only to reach the previous levels of attainment and progress in 2012, but to exceed them.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher ensure that teachers' performance is closely linked to pupils' progress, school targets and salary progression.
- There is a new leadership structure with phase leaders and subject leaders who are increasingly taking on more work, although they are not yet fully involved in developing teaching in their areas. They are tracking pupils' progress closely but have not yet started to evaluate the impact of teaching.
- New teachers have settled well into the life of the school because induction procedures are effective, routines and high expectations are well established, and there is a very strong team approach among all the staff.
- There are regular training opportunities, including working in the school of a local leader in education and in the schools of different partnerships fostered by the headteacher. However, there are missed opportunities to improve teachers' skills even further by sharing more widely the expertise demonstrated by the best teachers in the school.
- The curriculum, which includes a range of visits, visitors and out-of-school activities, makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is also true of assemblies, where the celebration of pupils' achievement and contribution to the community, and of the school's particular ethos, is strongly emphasised. Pupils work well cooperatively and support each other in their work. There is a strong sense of respect for different faiths and cultures as seen in the Tanzanian link which gives opportunities for pupils to experience difference.
- The school has implemented a range of approaches to engage parents including a parents' forum, run by the governors to keep them informed about what the school does. The large majority of parents who responded to the school's questionnaire have confidence in the school. In conversations with the inspectors, they commented on the support provided to help their children do well. One parent said in conversation after school, 'My child is really happy here and is doing really well. That means the world to me.'
- Funding for the pupil premium has been used for one-to-one and small-group support for pupils, and to buy books and equipment to support the teaching of mathematics and reading. Its impact is carefully monitored and eligible pupils are making good progress.

- The school has used money for funding sports to provide some specialist teaching for the pupils and professional development for the staff. It also funds additional sporting activities after school. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the after-school sports clubs which are having a positive impact on their health and well-being.
- Since the last inspection, the school has been appropriately supported by local authority's advisers, an independent school improvement partner and a local leader in education to address the areas for improvement identified.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements

■ **The governance of the school:**

- There has been a marked improvement in governance since the last inspection. The Chair of the Governing Body has led by example in ensuring that governors have received high-quality training in the key areas of their role, including the analysis of data. They are now holding leaders very effectively to account for the school's performance by asking detailed questions, visiting lessons, looking at the work in pupils' books, talking to staff and pupils, and receiving regular reports on progress. As a result, governors have developed an excellent knowledge of the quality of teaching, the school's strengths and its areas for improvement.
- Governors review the headteacher's performance thoroughly and check that the management of the performance of all staff is helping them to improve. Where staff are not making the expected improvements, the governors have fully supported leaders in taking swift action. Governors are also fully involved in decisions to reward high-performing teachers. Governors have made sure that procedures for safeguarding pupils fully meet national requirements. Governors know how pupil premium and sports funding is spent and the impact it is having on the pupils. They do not tolerate any form of discrimination.

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	103837
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	431686

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Green
Headteacher	Linda Perkins
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2012
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