

St Mary of Charity CofE (Aided) Primary School

Orchard Place, Faversham, Kent, ME13 8AP

Inspection dates

3–4 July 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Inadequate | 4 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Inadequate | 4 |
| Quality of teaching | | Inadequate | 4 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Requires improvement | 3 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Achievement is inadequate. Pupils have not made sufficient progress across the school.
- Pupils get too few opportunities to practise writing across a range of subjects. As a result pupils do not make good progress in their writing throughout the school.
- The attainment of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is too low.
- Teaching is inadequate. The many changes in the teaching staff have significantly affected the continuity of pupils' learning.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve.
- Teachers' marking is not consistently effective in helping pupils to improve their work.
- Activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage are insufficiently focused on ensuring pupils make a good start to their learning.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently positive, particularly when teaching does not motivate or interest them.
- There have been recent changes in leadership. Some new senior and middle leaders have not had time to have a positive impact on improving teaching and learning. Those with responsibility for special educational needs have not been given the time required to review this area of the school's work.

The school has the following strengths:

- Current senior leaders have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve teaching and achievement.
- Pupils' achievement is improving as the changes introduced by leaders embed.
- The school is calm and orderly. Pupils feel safe and secure.
- Leaders have implemented many changes which have had a positive impact upon pupils' learning.
- Gaps in attainment between pupils supported by additional funding and other pupils are reducing.
- Governors have become increasingly effective. They both support the school and hold it to account.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 13 lessons, six of which were seen together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the vice chair of the governing body and three other governors, the school's senior and subject leaders, the National Leader of Education who supports the school and two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 17 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were very few responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. However, inspectors looked at the school's own surveys of parents' and carers' views, conducted annually.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documents, including local authority reviews and action plans, and records of the school's checks on the quality of teaching. They also considered minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and the tracking of pupils' progress. They also looked closely at pupils' written work for the current school year and listened to pupils read.

Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Taylor

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- St Mary of Charity Church of England Primary School is smaller than the average sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or those looked after by the local authority, is above average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school shares its building with a children's centre. There is a private pre-school within the school grounds. Both of these are managed and inspected separately.
- The school has experienced considerable turbulence in staffing, both prior to and since the last inspection. Only two of the teaching staff in post at the beginning of the current school year remain in their original class. Some key senior staff have recently left the school for promotion. New senior leader appointments have been made for September 2014.
- The school will convert to academy status in the Autumn of 2014. The school will become part of the Canterbury Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school draws upon the advice and support of a National Leader of Education, who is head of St Eanswythe's Church of England Primary School, Folkestone.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - teachers across the school show consistently high expectations by setting work that builds on what pupils already know and can do
 - pupils produce consistently high-quality written work
 - teachers' marking is consistently useful to pupils
 - ensuring that pupils act upon the written feedback they receive so that the quality of their work improves.
- Accelerate pupils' progress across the school in order to raise standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 by:
 - checking and adapting the impact of the additional support provided for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to enable them to make more rapid progress
 - ensuring that opportunities to accelerate learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage are fully developed
 - implementing a systematic programme for improving handwriting, especially for older pupils
 - planning more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in different subjects.
- Improve pupils' attitudes to learning by:

- ensuring that the level of challenge for pupils and the quality of teaching engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm.

- Improve leadership and management, and accelerate the pace of change, by ensuring that:
 - as new appointments are made, a robust and effective senior leadership team is focused on improving teaching and learning
 - newly appointed middle leaders have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, primarily focused on improving teaching and learning and raising standards across the school
 - ensuring that the coordinator of special educational needs has the time and opportunity to implement changes in this aspect of the school's work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Achievement is inadequate. Over time, too few pupils have made sufficient progress from the time they joined the school. For the last three years, pupils in Years 3 to 6 have underachieved significantly. Standards at the end of Year 6 were low in 2013, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs make insufficient progress across the school. They generally attain at lower levels than similar pupils nationally. The impact of additional group teaching is often lost through frequent changes of class teacher.
- Achievement in writing has been low. The school has not given sufficient priority to ensuring high-quality handwriting and written work. Too few opportunities are planned for pupils to write in other subjects across the curriculum. As a result, pupils have not developed these skills to a high enough level. A greater focus on these aspects recently is contributing to improved progress.
- Effective actions to tackle long-standing underachievement through programmes to boost, for example, reading are now driving more rapid progress. More rigorous tracking systems, together with thorough, timely reviews of pupils' progress are all contributing to improving achievement.
- Most pupils are currently making progress close to that expected nationally. This represents a significant improvement compared to previous years. Better than expected progress, particularly in Year 6, is enabling pupils to make up lost ground. These pupils are now working at levels much closer to the national average than in 2013, particularly in writing. The most able older pupils have the opportunity to tackle the challenging Level 6 tests. Until recently, these pupils have also underachieved.
- Children enter Reception with levels of development below those typically expected for their age. Despite some good teaching, standards remain below those normally found on entry to Year 1.
- Overall standards by the end of Year 2 are below average, although standards in reading are improving rapidly now as a result of the intensive focus on reading.
- A below-average proportion of Year 1 pupils attained the expected standard in the phonics (the sounds that letters make) screening check in 2013.
- In 2013, Year 6 pupils supported by additional funding were the equivalent of around four terms behind their classmates in mathematics and three terms behind in reading and writing. The school now checks closely its use of additional funding. As a result these pupils, across the school, are making progress at least in line with that of their peers. For most year groups, the gap in attainment has significantly reduced this year.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate. Pupils have not made the progress they should have since the last inspection. Teaching has not provided sufficient challenge to drive rapid progress.
- Staff changes and the consequent lack of continuity in teaching, compounded by ineffective past teaching, have contributed to underperformance. Although progress is improving and inadequate teaching is reducing, there is insufficient good teaching to drive standards up more rapidly.
- Teachers do not always sufficiently check that all pupils are challenged by the activities provided and that they are actively engaged in learning.
- Teachers have had low expectations of the quality of pupils' writing, including their handwriting and presentation. Teachers too often accepted poor quality work. Not all pupils' written work was regularly marked early in the school year. Leaders are now well- focused on ensuring standards rise, but improvements have been too recent to ensure pupils make good progress.
- Teaching assistants provide stability, even when teachers have changed. The support they provide for pupils who benefit from additional funding is generally effective. However, the support for those who are disabled or who have special educational needs has less impact.
- Despite continuing problems with recruitment and retention, school systems, including the support for new staff, are now more robust, so that staff movements are more readily accommodated. As a result, the adverse impact of staff changes has reduced.
- Marking is not always followed up by teachers to ensure it effectively drives improvement. Pupils are not routinely expected to act upon the comments in teachers' marking. However, the school has ensured that most work, particularly writing, is now carefully marked, often with helpful comments.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage does not make sure children build their skills quickly. More thorough tracking and better-targeted support are ensuring that pupils for whom the school receives additional funding make increasingly rapid progress.
- The teaching of reading is improving, with planned opportunities to enable pupils to catch up. Pupils now read with more confidence and understanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently good. They occasionally lose interest when teaching fails to engage or challenge them, leading to some low-level disruption. Pupils do not always take enough care over their written work.
- Where there has been sustained effective teaching, as in Year 6, pupils concentrate well and show mature attitudes to learning. They do their best to produce good quality written work.
- There is little inappropriate behaviour and day-to-day behaviour has improved considerably. Exclusions are rare. Effective behaviour management systems ensure a consistent response to issues, despite frequent staff changes. The school has a positive ethos. Playtimes are calm and orderly. Over time, parents and carers have expressed few concerns about behaviour.
- Pupils are keen to undertake responsibilities within class and outdoors, thereby contributing to the efficient running of the school community.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe, and are confident that adults will respond quickly to any issues. The school makes extensive provision to support pupils and parents and carers who are experiencing difficulties.
- Pupils have a good appreciation of risk. They recognise that bullying, however infrequent, may take various forms. Older pupils understand the dangers of cyber bullying. Pupils feel that the school supports them well in identifying potential risk.
- Attendance has continued to improve and is broadly average.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Pupils' achievement has been adversely affected by high levels of staff turnover and extended

staff absences. These issues were compounded in the past by a lack of systems for monitoring pupils' progress and teachers' effectiveness, and a culture of low expectations. While staff turnover has remained high this year, the school is now more effective in managing change, and the negative impact on pupils' achievement has significantly reduced, with achievement rising.

- The school is temporarily disadvantaged by the recent promotion to other schools of some key senior staff. While replacement staff have been appointed, within a new leadership structure, this has increased pressure on current leaders.
- Insufficient time is available for those with responsibility for special educational needs to address some of the identified weaknesses in this provision.
- Pupils' writing skills are not promoted consistently through work in other subjects. As a result they do not make the progress they are capable of.
- The curriculum is appropriately broad. Recent initiatives to promote reading and writing are helping pupils to make progress, but are too recent to have made a significant difference to pupils' learning.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are thorough. Senior leaders now hold staff fully accountable for pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders track the progress of groups and individuals thoroughly, identifying gaps in their knowledge and understanding. They regularly adjust the provision of additional teaching so that it is effective in closing gaps in pupils' learning.
- School leaders have a realistic view of achievement and teaching. Their evaluations of teaching and learning are accurate. Systems for setting teachers' targets so that they improve their practice ensure a close link between teachers' performance and pay progression. Consequently, only effective teachers qualify for higher pay levels.
- School leaders monitor the impact of additional funding closely to ensure that it has maximum impact on pupils' learning.
- Use of the primary school sports funding is appropriately planned. This is improving the quality of sports coaching and pupils' health through the development of staff coaching skills, alongside new activities such as gymnastics.
- Support from the local authority has been extensive. This has provided robust challenge to accelerate improvement. The school has particularly benefited from the support of a National Leader of Education.
- The promotion of pupils' social, moral and spiritual development is good. Community links and partnerships, including extensive church links, are actively developed. Effective links with the local school partnership have enabled school leaders to draw on the expertise of others and improve practice in this school. Links with parents and carers are good.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance has improved significantly in the recent past. Governors have acted on the findings of a review of governance. They are fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They play an active role in setting a direction for the school and provide an increasingly high level of challenge for school leaders. They have undertaken training to enable them to contribute even more fully to self-evaluation and development planning.
- Governors have a good understanding of school performance data and can relate their knowledge to national trends. They are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity, tackling discrimination and promoting good relationships. They have a good understanding of the current quality of teaching and the links between staff salaries and teachers' effectiveness.
- Governors understand the impact of pupil premium funding on closing gaps between these pupils' attainment and others.
- Governors ensure that all statutory duties are met, including the procedures relating to safeguarding pupils.

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 | 133663 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 442485 |

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 | 189 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mary Wimlett |
| Headteacher | Pauline Hann |
| Date of previous school inspection | 11 September 2011 |
| Telephone number | 01795 532496 |
| Fax number | 01795 591052 |
| Email address | headteacher@smc.kent.sch.uk |

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