

St Mary's CofE Primary School

Station Road, Credenhill, Hereford, HR4 7DW

Inspection dates 8–9 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are average because too few more-able pupils reach higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Of the pupils who left the school in 2013, not enough made the progress expected of them in writing.
- Teaching in Key Stage 2 is inconsistent and pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is not quite as fast in Years 5 and 6 as it is for other pupils.
- The work set for pupils in lessons in Key Stage 2 is not always hard enough for more able pupils.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work does not consistently show pupils what they need to do to reach higher standards.
- There are not enough opportunities for the most able pupils to write at length and to use their mathematical skills when they are learning about other subjects.
- Leaders and managers' plans to improve pupils' achievement do not include precise enough targets based on different ability groups, including the most able, making good or better progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Children get off to a good start in the Reception Year, where they make good progress.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium make good progress and reach standards which are similar to, or better than, other pupils.
- Pupils, staff and parents are proud of the school. Parents highly value the care and guidance it provides for pupils.
- Pupils are very happy and keen to learn. They behave well in lessons and respect their peers, adults and the school environment. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for.
- Senior leaders and the governing body have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and of assessment. They are taking steps to improve them.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 11 lessons, including two lessons jointly observed with the deputy headteacher. A whole school assembly was also seen.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading and looked at the work in pupils' books jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They assessed current standards, how much progress pupils have made, and the quality of teachers' marking.
- Inspectors met with pupils, the Chair and other members of the governing body and school staff. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- Inspectors took account of responses to an inspection questionnaire from 30 staff, 22 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke informally to parents and carers at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including the school's information about the progress of pupils, planning and monitoring documents, reports from external school advisers, behaviour and attendance records and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Nicola Davies, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Kerr

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Nearly all of the pupils come from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the normal time is above average. Most of these pupils have parents who are serving in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through the pupil premium is above average. This is additional funding for pupils including those in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching particularly for older pupils in Key Stage 2 and in writing, by ensuring that:
 - teachers set tasks in lessons in Key Stage 2 that consistently challenge more-able pupils to develop and extend their skills
 - teachers' marking of pupils' work consistently shows pupils what they need to do to reach higher standards
 - there are good opportunities for the most able pupils to write at length and use their mathematical and problem solving skills when they are learning about different subjects.
- Ensure that plans for school improvement have more precise and measurable targets which are based on all groups of pupils making good or better progress, including the most able.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children join the Reception class with knowledge, skills and understanding that are below those typical for children of the same age. They make good progress in their Reception Year. The interesting activities and exciting environment spark their imaginations and staff harness this well to develop their reading and writing skills. Most children reach the expected level of development in all areas of learning although fewer reach the expected level in their number skills.
- Most pupils make expected progress across the school, generally reaching standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are in line with those found nationally in national tests and assessments in Years 2 and 6. However, in 2013 no pupils reached the higher levels in mathematics at the end of Year 2, and too few pupils reached the higher levels in reading and writing at the end of Year 6.
- In response to the 2013 national test results, the school has focused on improving the teaching of writing and mathematics to accelerate pupils' progress, particularly for those who are the most able. This has shown some success in Key Stage 1, where a higher proportion of current pupils have reached above-average standards in these subjects. However, too few pupils in Year 6 have made better than expected progress to reach higher levels in these subjects.
- Pupils throughout the school read well. The youngest pupils are quickly taught the sounds that letters make (phonics). The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has increased year-on-year, and most pupils now use their phonic skills confidently to read and spell unfamiliar words. Pupils practise their reading skills very regularly and most read fluently and expressively.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress and achieve well. This is because their needs are quickly identified by the coordinator for special educational needs, and extra support is provided by skilled teaching assistants and outside professionals where appropriate.
- The particular needs of pupils supported through the pupil premium are very well identified and met. For example, the school's 'Sunshine Club' provides highly effective extra support for pupils whose parents are serving in the armed forces, many of whom join or leave the school other than at the normal times. As a result, pupils eligible for the pupil premium make good progress across the school. Of the Year 6 pupils who took their tests in 2013, eligible pupils were, on average, two terms behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. This year there is no difference between the standards they reach at the end of Year 6 and the standards reached by other pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although improvements to the teaching of writing and mathematics have been successfully implemented in Key Stage 1, the teaching of these subjects across Key Stage 2, particularly for pupils in Years 5 and 6 is not yet consistently good. It does not always cater sufficiently well for more-able pupils. These pupils do not always have good opportunities to write at length nor to use their mathematical skills to solve mathematical problems or when they are learning about other subjects.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, attitudes and effort. As a result, pupils

behave well, work very hard and present their work neatly. However, teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve are not always high enough.

- Although teachers plan conscientiously to include different activities during lessons for pupils of different abilities, this planning is not precise enough. It does not clearly identify exactly what skills more-able pupils need to learn to reach higher levels. Similarly, teachers' marking does not focus sharply enough on guiding pupils to understand what they need to do next to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to helping pupils to learn. In classrooms, they work with pupils across the ability range and the extra support they give outside the classroom is effective in helping pupils who are falling behind or have particular social needs to make good progress.
- Teachers and other adults help pupils to communicate well. They encourage pupils to express themselves clearly and encourage them to discuss their ideas and collaborate with other pupils during lessons. Pupils learn well from this approach and most are able to speak in public with confidence and express themselves maturely by the time they leave the school.
- Teachers mark work very regularly and use praise well to promote high standards of presentation and effort. However, at times, teachers provide the solutions or corrections too readily, rather than providing the appropriate guidance to ensure pupils learn from their mistakes and take the opportunity to improve their own work.
- Classrooms are bright and well organised. Across the school, teachers take full advantage of the extensive outdoor areas and the local environment to give pupils the opportunity to learn. For example, children in the Reception class had enthusiastically written and designed postcards home which they delighted in posting at the local post office. Pupils in Year 1 were observed developing their number skills by working out the cost of buying enough vegetables from the school's well-tended kitchen garden to make a class stir-fry meal.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils arrive to school promptly and are eager to make the most of their time in lessons. Their positive attitudes to school life and to their peers are evident in classrooms and in the very happy atmosphere which pervades the school.
- Staff help pupils develop a clear sense of right and wrong and also help them to empathise with people in difficult situations and to consider what they can do to help. As a result, pupils often organise ways to raise money for particular causes or charities. Similarly, current pupils are involved in designing and planting a restful area within the grounds where pupils can spend time thinking or simply being quiet.
- The school includes all pupils well, whatever their background or circumstances. Playtimes are happy and collaborative, and pupils make the most of the different equipment they can use and the different areas they can play in. There is no litter and pupils take great care of the environment; for example, taking great pride and enjoyment in tending the kitchen garden and preparing the produce for sale.
- Lunchtimes are calm and sociable occasions. Pupils eat happily with older and younger pupils, and chat sociably with their peers and staff who help out at lunchtimes.

- Pupils are keen to come to school. Attendance is higher than that found nationally and has improved over the last year. This is due to the firm line the school has taken on absence during term time. Requests for such absence are referred to a committee of governors and only approved in highly exceptional circumstances.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders have effective systems to make sure that all safeguarding requirements are met, including rigorous checks on all adults who work with children. Staff are very aware of the need to ensure that pupils are safe and make sure that any potential risks are fully evaluated and minimised.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They know how to keep themselves safe and have no concerns about bullying or bad behaviour. They understand the negative impact of being unkind to others different to themselves, whether face-to-face or online, and are confident that this happens only rarely.
- The school maintains good links with local nurseries and secondary schools and prepares pupils well for their transfers to and from these organisations. When pupils join the school who have parents in the armed forces, specialist staff make immediate contact with their previous school whilst working with each pupil to record their likes, dislikes and feelings about moving school in a school 'passport'. These 'passports' are shared with class teachers, added to over time and passed on to the new school when pupils leave.
- Parents demonstrate great confidence in the school and value very highly the educational and social opportunities it provides. All of the parents who responded to the online survey are confident that their children are happy, safe and well looked after and would recommend the school to another parent.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Senior staff have not made enough use of the information gathered from their analyses of how well different groups of pupils are performing in order to draw up plans for improvement which are sufficiently challenging and specific. This means that the positive impact on teachers' lessons and how quickly pupils learn has been limited, particularly for more able pupils.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together to provide clear leadership to the school. They make sure that those who lead subjects have additional time to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.
- The key issues identified at the previous inspection have generally been tackled well. Senior leaders have ensured that lesson time is used more productively and teachers now make much better use of the skilled teaching assistants.
- The performance of staff has been managed appropriately. Teachers are held responsible for the progress made by pupils in their classes and, over the past year, senior staff have made more frequent checks on the quality of teaching, the quality of pupils' work and the quality and accuracy of assessment. They are appropriately taking steps to address the slower progress made by pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy the wide variety of subjects and topics they study in lessons and the activities available at lunchtimes and after school. Levels of participation in extra events and activities are high and extra funding for sport has been used well to increase the number of children participating in sport outside of lessons.

- The school is taking appropriate action to tackle any form of disadvantage or discrimination, and to make sure that all pupils have equal opportunities. Staff log the rare incidents of name calling carefully. Within the topics and lessons they study, school leaders make sure that pupils have interesting opportunities to learn about people who are different from themselves.
- The local authority provides very limited support to the school. The school has made its own arrangements to source additional support, including working with local schools and helping to organise a network of deputy headteachers. The school also employs an independent school improvement adviser who works with senior leaders to review the school's performance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well organised and governors bring a wide range of relevant experience to the tasks they undertake. Governors expect value for money and monitor the impact of pupil premium funding and sports funding very carefully. They visit the school regularly and individual governors use their specialist expertise to challenge and support staff. The governing body is well aware of the standards that current pupils reach and the areas where the school currently falls short. They use this to check that any potential pay rises for staff are linked to the learning and progress of pupils.

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	116799
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	443979

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Wydenbach
Headteacher	John Moynihan
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2009
Telephone number	01432 760408
Fax number	01432 761418
Email address	admin@credenhill.hereford.sch.uk

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