

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Chanters Road, Bideford, Devon, EX39 2QN

Inspection dates 18–19 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school. Teaching requires improvement, especially in Years 3, 4 and 5.
- Marking does not give pupils enough guidance on how to improve their work. Leaders have not taken effective action to address marking as an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar has been below the national average for two years. Leaders have not taken swift enough action to address this.
- Teaching does not always gain the interest of all pupils, or have high enough expectations of their behaviour and what they can achieve. As a result, progress in lessons is not good enough.
- A few pupils sometimes exhibit poor attitudes to learning and this results in some low-level disruption in lessons and at playtimes.
- The most-able pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of making.
- Governors have not been rigorous enough in checking and following up on the impact of actions taken to improve the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of mathematics teaching has improved across the school, leading to pupils' better understanding, progress and achievement by the time they leave Year 6.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well as a result of effective pastoral care and well directed support.
- Parents are very supportive of the headteacher and the staff. They value their children's educational experiences at the school.
- Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes is good. Well organised routines and learning opportunities ensure pupils settle quickly, are happy, and are keen to learn.
- The school works closely with the local church and community, providing good opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual and moral education.
- Effective work with a range of external organisations supports pupils' good understanding of how to stay safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons or part lessons, including examples of teaching in every year group. One lesson observation was carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspection team looked at pupils' books in a range of subjects to establish the quality of their work over time. The headteacher and an assistant headteacher joined one of the inspectors to check on the quality of work in books.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils, as well as individual pupils, during their lessons and at playtimes to find out their views about the school.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and observed their behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors talked informally with parents to gauge their views of the school, took account of 97 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and analysed 45 responses from the staff questionnaires.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, a group of pupils, members of the senior leadership team, teaching assistants and governors. A telephone discussion took place with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's plans for improvement, external reports, records of checks made by leaders, and information on pupils' attainment and their progress. They also scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Stuart Bellworthy, Lead inspector

Seconded Inspector

David Edwards

Her Majesty's Inspector

Rowena Onions

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's Church of England Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. The school has expanded since the last inspection to have two classes in each year group, with 14 classes altogether.
- Most pupils are White British; few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible to receive free school meals or looked after by the local authority.
- The school has met the government's floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is part of the Bideford Learning Community and the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Trust groups of schools.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage attend full time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better and pupils' achievement improves rapidly, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - improve the teaching of reading, handwriting, spelling and punctuation and provide more opportunities for pupils to apply these skills across all subjects
 - ensure all pupils are provided with work that will interest them and challenge them to achieve more
 - give clear next steps to pupils when marking their books, so that pupils know how to improve their work
 - allow pupils time to reflect on their learning in lessons and respond to teachers' marking
 - provide the most-able pupils with challenging work at all times, to ensure they make the progress they are capable of making.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - having consistently high expectations of learning and behaviour across the school
 - increasing the urgency with which senior and middle leaders check on pupils' progress and achievement
 - ensuring governors hold leaders more rigorously to account for the performance of the school.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- School leaders are over generous in their assessment of teaching, achievement and behaviour. Teaching is not consistently good, particularly in the Years 3, 4 and 5 classes, because leaders have not been sharply focused enough on what needs to improve and how. Senior and middle leaders' expectations of learning and behaviour are not high enough.
- Nevertheless, there are strengths in some aspects of leadership and management. Leadership is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, and there is good management of special educational needs.
- Improvements have been made to the quality of mathematics teaching across the school. Pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 2 has been above the national average for the last two years. However, attainment at the end of Year 6 was well below the national average in reading, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar in the 2014 national tests. Leaders have not taken swift enough action to improve attainment in English in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6.
- Leaders use additional government funding well to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress. For example, additional teachers and teaching assistants have been employed to support specific programmes in mathematics, reading, and writing, as well as speech and language therapy. Teachers regularly check on how well individual pupils are doing and if they are at risk of falling behind. As a result, the extra help has enabled pupils to catch up and sometimes exceed the attainment of other pupils in the school and similar pupils nationally.
- The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. Essential staff training is kept up to date so that everyone knows what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. When concerns are identified, the school liaises closely with other agencies to provide effective support.
- The school's newly implemented curriculum provides a broad range of learning experiences. English and mathematics are supplemented by a thematic approach in all other subjects. However, it is too early to know if the new curriculum will motivate all pupils and lead to better progress.
- Adults use the school's values of 'Belong, Achieve, be Safe and Enjoy' to deliver assemblies and lessons that effectively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Sport premium funding is used well to increase pupils' participation in competitive activities and physical education. For example, a specialist coach works alongside staff to deliver gymnastics sessions for pupils. This has improved staff confidence and led to some pupils joining a local gymnastics club.
- The local authority has provided the school with support to improve the quality of mathematics teaching, marking and presentation. As a result, mathematics standards rose in 2014 to be equal to the national average for the first time in four years.
- Several parents made a point of speaking to inspectors in the playground to express how pleased they were with the school. One parent also wrote a letter saying, 'We feel it is a fantastic school, with a friendly and dynamic atmosphere with strong links within the local community.'
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know what the school does well, but have not been sufficiently challenging in ensuring that leaders tackle areas for improvement.
 - Governors are aware of progress and attainment data. However, they are not rigorously focused on challenging the leaders to achieve outcomes that are at least in line with the national average in all subjects by the time pupils leave in Year 6.
 - Pay decisions are now linked more closely to staff performance. Governors have some understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching across the school.
 - Governors are knowledgeable about how additional funding, such as pupil premium and the sport premium grant, is being spent and check that it is making a positive difference to pupils' achievement.
 - Governors manage the school's budget effectively. Building projects have been successfully completed which provide new classrooms and have significantly improved teaching facilities and outdoor spaces for the increasing number of pupils attending the school.
 - Governors visit the school regularly and actively promote the school's values by leading assemblies and working closely with a local church group. Governors contribute to effective safeguarding arrangements, the promotion of equalities and tackling discrimination. They are informed about how the introduction of the new National Curriculum and the local agreed syllabus for religious education is implemented throughout the school. However, it is too early to measure the impact of this work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Some pupils do not achieve well enough because school leaders and teachers do not set high enough expectations of their learning and behaviour. A small number of pupils do not show good attitudes to learning.
- Most pupils demonstrate respectful and considerate behaviour in lessons and around the school. For example, in a whole school assembly, pupils entered the hall calmly and they remained alert and attentive throughout. Pupils respond well to the house points system. They work hard to gain rewards and are proud of their achievements.
- Communication with outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils is well managed. The school has an effective pastoral care system to keep these pupils safe and manage their behaviour. Positive relationships exist between staff and pupils. Staff receive regular training to support and promote pupil behaviour, but expectations of how pupils should behave are not consistently applied across the school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe and understand how to keep themselves safe in most situations. This is because the school has worked effectively with outside agencies to strengthen pupils' understanding. For example, outside organisations have visited the school to increase pupils' awareness of cyber bullying and how to stay safe using the internet.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors were aware of different types of bullying. Pupils know what to do if others say unkind words and they are confident that staff will follow up concerns. The school's participation in anti-bullying events has improved pupils' understanding of this issue.
- The school promotes good attendance and absences are quickly followed up. As a result of a greater focus last year, pupil attendance rates have improved and are now slightly above the national average for all groups.
- The school has an effective safeguarding policy and all adults are regularly trained in how to recognise risk and keep children safe from harm.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable across the school. In particular, older pupils do not make enough progress to ensure that they achieve in line with national averages by the time they leave Year 6.
- Reading, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar are not taught effectively in Years 5 and 6. Although the school has recently introduced additional 'word-work' sessions, it is too early to see the impact of this work in pupils' writing. Teaching does not sufficiently challenge the most-able pupils and, consequently, attainment for this group at the end of Year 6 is below the national average.
- Where teaching is weaker, pupils do not make sufficient gains in their knowledge and understanding because teachers do not set work that meets their learning needs or challenges them enough. As a result, pupils' misunderstandings are sometimes left unchecked and therefore progress is not good.
- Where teaching is stronger, it is often because teachers check assessment information carefully and use this to plan additional support for groups. A whole school focus on mathematics has led to greater progress and attainment for pupils in this subject. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, all adults worked effectively with individuals and groups and provided further challenge when required. As a result, pupils of all abilities were able to round numbers to the nearest 10, 100 or 1000 confidently.
- The quality of presentation in pupils' books is not consistently good as too many books are poorly presented and organised. Most books are marked frequently by teachers. The school has recently introduced a new marking policy where pupils are using special pens enthusiastically to improve their work. However, pupils lack regular opportunities to respond to teachers' marking. Teachers' comments do not always lead to better learning because they are not focused on next steps. However, these changes have not been in place long enough to have a significantly positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- Teaching is typically stronger in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Years 1 and 2, and in Year 6. In these classes, teachers set high expectations of what children and pupils can achieve and use good subject knowledge to engage them throughout lessons. Teachers provide challenge and promote good relationships so that pupils are motivated to build confidence and learn. In a Year 1 lesson, where pupils were re-writing the story of the *Three Billy Goats Gruff*, pupils concentrated well, produced meaningful sentences and made good progress in their writing. Work in their books shows that this focused approach and good achievement in writing are typical.
- Pupils enjoy reading and the school is rightly proud of the recently refurbished library. It is being used

effectively to promote pupils' interest in reading, especially amongst boys. The teaching of letters and the sounds they make is effective and pupils were seen using these skills well in their writing. Reading skills are taught well to younger pupils, which accounts for the marked rise in pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2.

- The school employs a large number of teaching assistants, most of whom are deployed effectively throughout the school. Many work with disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs, who make good progress. The teaching assistants who met with the inspector are well managed, provided with recent relevant training and know what the school needs to focus on to improve.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards of attainment in English and mathematics have risen. At the end of Year 2, pupils attain levels that are above the national average, except in writing. Similarly, attainment at the end of Year 6 has risen in some areas, but is still below the national average in English. However, pupils' progress throughout Years 5 and 6 is improving as a result of external support and better teaching. This is particularly the case in mathematics.
- The most-able pupils achieve well overall in their first few years in school, although less so in writing. However, as they progress through the school they are not always sufficiently challenged because the work they are given is sometimes too easy and teachers' expectations of them are too low. Although the most-able pupils in Years 5 and 6 made good progress in reading and writing in 2014, their attainment was still below national expectations.
- Year 1 pupils that did not reach the expected level in the 2014 national phonic check are catching up securely in Year 2 because early reading skills are taught well. For example, weaker readers, when reading aloud, successfully sound out unfamiliar words using their improved knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make).
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is carefully monitored. The additional support given to these pupils has reduced the attainment gap between disadvantaged and other pupils at the school. However, disadvantaged pupils still remain, on average, two terms behind their peers in all areas of English and mathematics by the time they leave Year 6. This group achieves better than the same group nationally in reading and mathematics, but less well in writing and grammar punctuation and spelling. The gaps in the attainment of different groups of pupils within the school at the end of Year 2 are also closing because they receive well-tailored programmes of support and effective help in lessons.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is effective and their needs are met. Assessment information shows that the gap in progress and attainment between different groups is narrowing, as a result of well directed support, especially in reading and writing.
- Pupils reflect thoughtfully and sensibly discuss sensitive issues. In a whole school assembly based on 'making a difference', pupils contributed examples such as 'helping someone who is stuck' and 'making a contribution to charity by being in a charity event'.
- The school promotes good relationships, including respect for different faiths and cultures. The school's positive ethos and links within the locality enable pupils to develop an understanding of the value of belonging to a mixed community. Pupils' experience of democracy has been deepened by the election of the school council.

The early years provision

is good

- Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. The early years leader has high expectations for all children. Staff are well trained and successful in providing a stimulating learning environment that captures the imagination of children from the moment they arrive at school. Children have been involved in the design of significant recent developments to the outdoor learning area, which has further enhanced the good quality of provision.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children enter the school with skills that are generally below those typical for their age. High quality leadership, effective organisation and good teaching enable children to make rapid progress, so that the large majority of children are well prepared for Year 1 at the end their first year in school. The attainment gap between those pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and their peers has reduced as a result of good teaching and well planned play and learning activities.
- Children begin the school day confidently and happily because of the well-established routines that are reinforced by all adults working in this area. All adults ensure children learn in a safe and caring

environment and check daily the provision and equipment to make sure it is safe to use.

- All adults set very clear learning expectations that children understand. Consequently, children are enthusiastic and behave well. They develop a good sense of how to keep themselves and others safe and are keen to join in the learning activities.
- Children move sensibly between the indoor and outdoor provision. They are helped to understand the importance of keeping safe. For example, two children are chosen each day to be health and safety monitors, wearing high-visibility jackets and reporting to adults when they see other pupils being careful (or otherwise) with equipment and resources.
- Teaching is good. A wide range of carefully planned learning activities ensures that children have daily opportunities to learn and achieve well. For example, children showed good concentration using tweezers to pick up a range of fluffy balls, whilst others used modelling clay to strengthen the muscles in their hands so that they might grip a pencil and form letters with greater skill. All adults use mobile technology to check and record children's learning throughout the day. They use this information carefully to adjust the learning to suit the children's needs better.
- The support for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs is effective. These children are nurtured well and they make good progress in line with others. Adults ensure that all children are provided with just the right amount of challenge to make good progress. The most-able children are given activities that challenge them to achieve highly.
- Parents who spoke with inspectors were all very positive and appreciative of the good start their children were making to school. They confirmed they are kept regularly informed of their children's learning and progress through newsletters, notices, formal meetings and informal discussion with teachers and other adults.

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	113385
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	443870

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	400
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jerry Hope
Headteacher	Adrian Scarrett
Date of previous school inspection	15-16 October 2009
Telephone number	01237 477288
Fax number	01237 423450
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