

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Penn Hill Road, Bath, BA1 4EH

## Inspection dates

3–4 February 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Leadership and management are good because leaders at all levels, including governors, work as an effective team to maintain high standards. As a result, pupils attain well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The impact of school governors is particularly effective in building on the school's successes and driving forward school improvement.
- Pupils make exceptionally good progress in reading and mathematics and are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils' good behaviour and improving attendance reflect the school's strongly held values and beliefs.
- Effective safeguarding procedures ensure that pupils are safe and very well cared for.
- The subjects that pupils learn are well planned to meet the individual needs of pupils and generate an enthusiasm for learning. Enrichment activities are a particular strength.
- Teaching is good throughout the school because it is helping pupils to learn well. As a result, all pupils, including those who are the most able, those with special educational needs, those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress.
- The school effectively promotes British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- In the early years provision, children are well taught and all are keen to learn. As a result, children make a good start to their schooling.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- The progress that pupils, especially boys, make in writing is not rapid enough and there are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length.
- There is inconsistency in the quality of written guidance provided for pupils about how to improve their work. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to respond to their teachers' marking.
- Improvement plans do not always make it sufficiently clear how leaders, will know that planned actions have had a positive and measureable impact on pupils' achievement.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors saw learning in every class and observed 14 lessons. Some lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils, heard some of them read and talked informally to pupils in the playground and around school. Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior staff, two governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including plans for the school's improvement, information about how well pupils are doing and records of governors' meetings. They also examined records relating to pupils' behaviour, attendance, safety and welfare. Inspectors looked at pupils' books to see how they were doing.
- The views of parents and carers were taken into account through the scrutiny of the 65 responses to the online Parent View survey. An inspector also held a discussion with a representative group of parents and carers.
- Staff views were taken into consideration through discussions with staff and by scrutinising questionnaires completed by 17 staff members.

## Inspection team

Chris Nye, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Deborah Marklove

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-size primary school. There is one full-time Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage and one class in each other year group.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is lower than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding from the government for disadvantaged pupils.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, is below the national average.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils with other ethnic heritages or who speak English as an additional language is similar to that found in other schools nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school is a member of the South Clifton Catholic Federation of schools which provides collaborative links with a group of other Catholic primary, secondary and independent schools in the Diocese.
- A new headteacher has been appointed to replace the current long-serving headteacher in April.

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

- Strengthen pupils' progress in writing, especially that of boys, by:
  - embedding newly introduced strategies to support the development of pupils' writing skills
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to produce longer pieces of writing.
- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by ensuring that:
  - the written feedback given to pupils by teachers consistently provides clear guidance on how they can improve their work
  - pupils routinely have opportunities to respond to their teacher's written comments and challenges.
- Strengthen leadership by ensuring that strategic plans clearly identify how the success of the planned actions can be measured against how well pupils are doing..

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has ensured that all members of staff work as a united and effective team. Leaders at all levels have high expectations and are ambitious for their pupils to be the best that they can be. Leaders, including governors, have a clear understanding of what needs to improve and consequently the school has the capacity to build on past successes. Leadership and management are not outstanding because some weaknesses in teachers' marking, strategic planning and progress in writing have not been fully resolved.
  - Leaders closely monitor the impact of teaching on pupils' progress, and when weaknesses are identified, swift action is taken to address these. Detailed analysis of pupils' achievement and the results of checks on teaching and learning are closely linked to the management of teachers' performance.
  - Improvement plans clearly identify suitable priorities and the school development plan is complemented by subject action plans. However, plans do not always identify sufficient detail about the criteria against which the success and impact of actions can be measured.
  - The school is currently at the later stages of adjusting the planning and coverage of the subjects taught in order to reflect the requirements of the new National Curriculum. Leaders ensure that the best of the previous coverage is not lost and that pupils' attainment is accurately assessed and checked. The school provides a broad and well-balanced range of learning experiences for all its pupils and has used the limited space of the school site creatively, such as in the provision of a forest school area. Pupils' learning is enriched by a range of trips, visitors and clubs. Spanish is taught throughout the school and art, design and music are particular strengths.
  - The school actively promotes pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development and understanding of British values. As a result, pupils demonstrate a strong sense of empathy and awareness of current issues. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, in one lesson pupils showed a very mature understanding of what it meant to be a refugee.
  - Middle leaders have a clear understanding of their roles and the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. They work diligently to drive improvement. The impact of this has been clear in mathematics. In writing, weaknesses in progress have been identified and appropriate staff training and strategies introduced. However, because this is very recent, it is too soon to judge the impact on pupils' progress.
  - The deputy headteacher, who also has the role of special educational needs coordinator, is very effective in training staff and managing the support for pupils who have special educational needs. As a result, pupils make rapid progress from their starting points.
  - Pupil premium funding is used well to provide support for disadvantaged pupils' learning. As a result, they are making good progress, especially in reading and mathematics.
  - Additional government funding for primary schools' physical education and sports is well planned and used to improve pupils' healthy lifestyles. Clubs, physical activities and competitive sports have been encouraged and developed and take-up by pupils has increased significantly.
  - The school works well with parents and carers and the local community. A very large percentage of the parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey felt that the school was well led and managed and that their child was happy in school. This positive view was confirmed during a discussion that an inspector had with a group of parents and carers.
  - The school actively promotes an atmosphere where adults and pupils are valued and in which equality of opportunity, high standards of behaviour and care and an intolerance of all forms of discrimination are the norm.
  - The local authority has provided a light-touch support for the school, but has made a significant and valued contribution to the governors' recent and very rigorous process for selecting a new headteacher.
  - All safeguarding procedures are securely in place, meet statutory requirements and are rigorously applied.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors provide outstanding support and appropriately rigorous challenge to school leaders. This has a significant impact on helping to maintain the school's strengths and drive improvements. Governors are exceptionally well led and have a wide range of skills which have been well matched to their roles. They are well trained and have a very good understanding of performance data. They closely monitor the performance of the school and because the school is a close-knit community, are well known to parents and carers.
  - Governors are kept well informed of how teachers' impact on pupils' progress is linked to salary

increases and about how underperformance is tackled.

- Governors ensure that resources are effectively deployed to meet the needs of pupils. For example, they have authorised the use of pupil premium funding to employ additional teaching staff to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics.

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

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It is not yet outstanding because attendance, although improving, is not consistently above the national average. Pupils are usually enthusiastic learners in all the subjects that they study, but occasionally some lose concentration and do not work as hard as they should.
- Pupils are very polite and friendly and play well together during break and lunchtimes. Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent and effective behaviour management systems are consistently applied. These are having a positive impact on improving the behaviour of those pupils who find behaving well a challenge.
- Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and are actively encouraged to care for the school and take their responsibilities seriously. Their views are listened to and valued by adults.
- Pupils support and care for each other well. For example, older pupils regularly pair up with younger ones to read them stories.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils and parents and carers say that pupils feel safe and well cared for and that safeguarding systems are effective.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including racism and cyber bullying. Although bullying is rare, pupils know what to do if they encounter it. Meticulous records of unacceptable behaviour are kept which provide a clear account of what happened in each occurrence and how it was resolved.

## **The quality of teaching** is good

- The quality of teaching is good because, over time and in all subjects that are studied, it is helping pupils to make good progress, especially in mathematics and reading. It is not outstanding because, although pupils' work is marked by teachers, the quality of marking varies. In some classes, not enough written guidance is provided to pupils about what they need to do next to develop their learning. Pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to respond to teachers' written guidance or challenges.
- Phonics (the sounds that letters make) is well taught and is helping pupils attain high standards in reading. Two very well-resourced and used libraries and enthusiastic teaching ensure that pupils are encouraged to read widely and often. As a result, pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes towards reading and read with skill and expression.
- Teachers have high expectations and know their pupils very well. Lessons are well planned and structured and, because they take account of what pupils have and have not understood in previous lessons, match the needs of all groups of pupils well. As a result, the most able pupils are suitably challenged. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. All groups make good progress.
- Imaginative tasks and a positive learning environment in each class motivate pupils to enjoy their learning. For example, following pupils' perceptive and carefully planned analysis of a poem by John Agard, they were inspired to write poems on a similar theme.
- In lessons, pupils make good progress because teachers use questioning skilfully to challenge them and check their progress and understanding. This is used especially well to challenge the most able pupils.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects that they teach and use resources, including information and communication technology, well to support teaching and learning.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is good and pupils use and apply their skills in numeracy to solve everyday problems. Although their skills in grammar, spelling and punctuation are well taught, the school has rightly recognised that more needs to be done to apply these skills in writing so that progress accelerates.
- There is an appropriate homework policy which is consistently applied across the school. Parents and carers appreciate the clear guidance, for example in mathematics, which is on the school's website.
- Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' learning, especially those who are at an early stage of speaking English or who have special educational needs. They are well trained to provide

targeted support and communicate well with teachers. As a result, such pupils make good progress across the school.

- Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey said that they felt their child is well taught. This positive view was confirmed by the group of parents and carers who met an inspector. One comment summed up all their views: 'The teachers really know my children well, and the support and care is exceptional.'

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement is good because pupils attain very well in reading, writing and mathematics over time. However, it is not outstanding because progress in writing is not as rapid as it should be. The school has taken action to address this but it is too soon to judge the impact of this.
- Children in Reception make good progress in all their areas of learning. Last year the percentage achieving a good level of development rose from 52% in March to over 70% in July, exceeding the local authority and national averages.
- Pupils achieve exceptionally well in phonics because it is well taught. Last year, 97% of Year 1 pupils attained the expected standard and the current year group are on track to achieve similar outcomes this year.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been well-above average in the past in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in the most recent annual assessments, reading and mathematics were average but writing was slightly below. The school has taken effective action to improve attainment in Key Stage 1. Since September the school's assessment and inspection evidence shows that achievement is improving in all areas.
- In Key Stage 2, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average, and significantly so in reading and mathematics. However, the progress that last year's Year 6 boys made in writing from when they were in Year 2 was below average. The school has recognised that boys' writing is a weakness across the school and has put in place strategies to accelerate progress. Since September, pupils are demonstrating good use of literacy skills in their books, but the quantity of writing, especially long pieces of writing, is insufficient.
- A particular strength is pupils' achievement in speaking and listening. Pupils are articulate and confident when speaking to each other or adults and they listen well to other people.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make at least the same good progress in reading and mathematics as their classmates. Although progress in writing is the area where progress is slowest, this is starting to increase.
- Disadvantaged pupils make at least good progress, from their individual starting points, throughout the school. Gaps between the attainment of these pupils and that of their classmates are closing.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 were, on average, two terms behind their classmates in mathematics, one term behind in writing and one and a half terms behind in reading. Compared to other pupils nationally, they were at a similar stage in reading and mathematics, and one term behind in writing.
- The most able pupils achieve very well. The percentage of pupils in Year 6 last summer reaching the higher levels of attainment in mathematics, reading, and English, grammar, punctuation and spelling tests was significantly better than that of most other schools nationally. This is because teaching appropriately challenges most-able pupils to achieve well.

### The early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is good, with all areas of learning well planned and resourced in the Reception class. Good use is made of the classroom and the outside area. This encourages children to manage risk, develop physical skills and interact with adults and other children.
- Children start Reception with skills that are broadly typical for their age, except in literacy and mathematics, where they are lower. However, good quality teaching, care and support mean that they make good progress and consistently achieve well.
- Learning activities are creatively planned to inspire children to love learning. They talk confidently about what they are learning and tasks are well matched to the children's needs.
- Parents, carers and staff contribute to accurate records of children's progress since entering school and parents and carers feel that they are well informed about their child's progress. However, some of the 'learning journals', which record evidence of individual children's progress, lack sufficient detail.

- All safeguarding arrangements meet legal requirements.
- The early years leader provides effective leadership and works closely with other leaders to monitor, evaluate and plan how the provision can further improve. Transition into the Reception class and from Reception to Year 1 is very well planned and children's learning is not interrupted as a result.

## 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>	109261
<b>Local authority</b>	Bath and North East Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	453373

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 aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	207
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Seamus Brogan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anthony Brennan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12–13 May 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01225 429030
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