

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

St Mary's Road, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7BU

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2015

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Require improvement | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| 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

- Leaders and managers, including governors, have not ensured that the school has improved to good or better levels since the last inspection. Pupils' progress is not yet consistently good in Years 1 to 6.
- Leaders are not rigorous enough in checking that all funding is being used to best advantage in improving pupils' progress.
- Information provided for parents on the school website is incomplete and does not meet statutory requirements.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Teaching does not set high enough expectations for what pupils should achieve, especially in their writing.
- Pupils' attainment is below average by the end of Year 6, particularly in reading and writing. Pupils' achievement is not consistently good enough across the school.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 do not always understand what they are reading because their comprehension skills are weak.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in the early years provision where members of staff provide interesting work that promotes good learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments are promoted effectively. Pupils behave well and feel safe.
- Teachers and teaching assistants manage behaviour well and form good relationships with the pupils.
- Leaders have made some improvements, particularly in mathematics. Pupils' attainment and progress in Years 1 and 2 are improving and they reach average levels of attainment in mathematics when they start in Year 3.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons, four jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with leaders, teachers, pupils and members of the governing body.
- The inspection team took into account the 15 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and held informal discussions with a number of parents.
- The inspectors considered the views expressed in the survey responses from 11 members of staff.
- A range of information supplied by the school was scrutinised, including the school's own information about how well pupils are doing, planning documents and checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors also looked at the school development plan, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Alison Cartlidge, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Peter Lacey-Hastings

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's is a broadly average-sized primary school.
- The Nursery has morning and afternoon part-time sessions and there is one full-time Reception class in the early years provision.
- Most pupils are White British, with a very small number of Black African pupils. There is a larger-than-average proportion of pupils of Gypsy-Roma or Traveller heritage.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is above average. This is additional funding for disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- There have been several changes in teaching staff since the previous inspection, and some teachers are on temporary appointments to cover long-term staff absences.
- 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and increase their progress in Years 1 to 6, especially in reading and writing, by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently have high enough expectations for what pupils can achieve in each lesson
 - ensuring that pupils have work which consistently develops their learning, particularly in writing
 - increasing pupils' understanding of what they are reading.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that:
 - leaders are more rigorous in checking that spending improves all pupils' learning
 - ensuring that remaining inconsistencies in teaching and learning are tackled swiftly so that pupils' progress becomes consistently good or better
 - making sure that parents are provided with all the required information on the school website.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leaders at all levels have not ensured that the school's effectiveness has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning are not yet consistently good. Pupils' progress continues to be uneven across the school. Training and support are having a positive impact, but staff changes have slowed the rate of improvement.
- Despite recent improvements, leaders do not ensure equality of opportunity. This is because the progress that pupils make in their learning is unevenly balanced across some year groups owing to variations in the quality of teaching. Leaders are vigilant, however, in ensuring that there is no discrimination of any kind and good relations are fostered well.
- Middle leaders are not always checking up rigorously enough to make sure that all groups of pupils are always doing well enough. They have begun to develop clearer information on how well pupils are progressing, but this information is not used well enough to assess whether additional funding is being used effectively.
- Leaders are aware of what works well in the school and what remains to be done to ensure that the school becomes good. They are beginning to establish a culture in which good teaching and learning can flourish more consistently. There are suitable systems for checking up on how well teachers are improving their work. Teachers are being held to account for the progress of their pupils more than in the past. This is starting to have a positive impact, especially in mathematics, where there has been the biggest focus for development.
- Funding for pupils who are disadvantaged has not been monitored well enough in the past. The school has reviewed provision and funding is now being used more effectively. Spending is on additional staffing and help for small groups. This extra help is closing the gaps in attainment, but it is too soon to assess if the changes are fully effective. Information on the impact of funding is not shown on the school's website so that parents are not kept fully informed. Leaders are aware that they have not been rigorous enough in the past about checking that spending decisions lead to improved outcomes for pupils' learning.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and interesting. Provision is stronger in numeracy than in reading and writing following a successful whole-school priority to promote mathematics. There are good extra-curricular activities such as clubs and visits, and visitors are used well to broaden pupils' experiences.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength in the school. British values, such as tolerance and respect, are promoted strongly in lessons and in collective worship. The school supports pupils well in the development of these qualities. Pupils also learn effectively about traditions and culture. For example, during the inspection, pupils learned about St George's day. There are good opportunities for pupils to appreciate art and music, and all pupils learn to play a musical instrument during their time at the school.
- The additional funding for physical education and sport is being used appropriately to extend resources and provide opportunities for pupils to take part in interesting new sporting clubs and activities. These include table tennis, archery and skateboarding. Leaders are better at assessing how pupils' participation and social skills develop, rather than the impact on the pupils' fitness and physical education skills. The information about the way this funding is being spent and its impact is not shown on the school's website.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Leaders check that all members of staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children and provide the right training to help them care for pupils. Members of staff take the pupils' safety very seriously and are vigilant in monitoring their needs.
- The local authority has been effective in supporting mathematics work. Support has been less effective in identifying areas to improve which lead to a good school.
- The school has a positive partnership with parents, although the school's website does not provide all the required information to keep parents fully informed. Parents are especially pleased with the way the school ensures that the pupils feel safe. They make positive comments such as: 'They pick up any concerns,' and 'Teachers are friendly.'
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has not ensured that the school has improved enough to become good or that all statutory information is provided on the school's website. Nevertheless, there have been several changes to the governing body since the previous inspection and there is a renewed drive to improve the school more rapidly. Governors have undergone an external review from the local authority and extensive training. As a result, they understand strengths and weaknesses in provision. Governors know how achievement at the school compares with that in others. They have started to provide more challenge to school leaders and are passionate about doing better for pupils. Governors are

knowledgeable about how teachers' performance is being managed. They know how good teaching is rewarded and what is being done to support teachers to enable them to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite, courteous and enthusiastic about learning. They are tolerant and respect others, including those new to the school or from differing backgrounds. They work together well in class and play together harmoniously.
- Parents agree that pupils' behaviour is good and that their children are happy to come to school.
- Pupils say that instances of unkind behaviour or bullying are rare and are dealt with swiftly on the occasions they occur. Two pupils spoke for others by saying: 'Bullying gets sorted out straight away,' and 'It's not that kind of school (to have bullying).' Pupils are knowledgeable about various types of bullying and why they are wrong.
- Pupils are keen to carry out responsibilities, such as acting as behaviour mentors or school councillors, and enjoy helping others.
- Pupils are attentive in lessons and keen to complete their work. They do not always push themselves to do their best. For example, some pupils who join their handwriting in their handwriting books carry on printing at other times.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe at school and know how to stay safe. For example, they know how to handle equipment carefully and to take care when playing running and chasing games. They understand how to stay safe when using the internet or when approached by a stranger.
- Pupils know what to do if they have any concerns and are confident that members of staff will help them when they are worried.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, while teachers have the right knowledge and skills, they do not consistently expect pupils to complete hard enough work, especially in their reading and literacy.
- Teachers do not always make clear to pupils what they are to do next when they complete work quickly. Pupils are not always sure what to do when they are ready to move on to something more difficult. A number of pupils spoken to during the inspection said that their work is sometimes too easy.
- Teaching in mathematics has improved since the previous inspection. Resources are used well to support the pupils' learning in many lessons. For example, in Year 1, pupils chose from a wide range of counting equipment to help them make two-digit numbers.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have good relationships with their pupils and plan varied activities that capture the pupils' interest. Consequently, they manage behaviour well and there is the right climate for learning in the classrooms.
- Teachers ask some good questions to promote discussion, although at times these do not lead to pupils thinking more deeply about their work.
- Teachers frequently mark pupils' work and make suggestions about how they can improve. Pupils enjoy answering questions about their work, although teachers do not always make the most of the positive work attitudes of pupils so that their progress is consistently good or better.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because their attainment by the end of Year 6 is below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress is not consistently good enough across the school.
- Progress is inconsistent, especially in reading and writing. In reading, pupils have improved their ability to use the sounds that letters make to help them to read unfamiliar words, but they do not always understand what they have read. In writing, pupils are not always encouraged to build on what they can already do quickly enough, so that they can extend and improve their skills more rapidly.
- Disadvantaged pupils remain behind others at the school and nationally. In 2014, they were two terms behind other pupils at the school in mathematics, and a year behind in reading and writing. Compared

with other pupils nationally, they were over a year behind in reading, writing and mathematics. Improvements in provision are beginning to have a positive impact in many cases. Consequently, gaps in attainment are closing, although not all of these pupils make consistently good progress when compared with the national average.

- Pupils of Gypsy–Roma heritage settle well during their time at the school but they make similar uneven progress to other pupils at the school.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs requires improvement because not all pupils do as well as they should. Recent staff training has led to better support for these pupils in class and is starting to have a positive impact.
- The most-able pupils generally make expected progress given their starting points, although they do not always have challenging enough work in lessons.
- Pupils' attainment has risen overall in the last two years, especially in mathematics, and attainment is now broadly average by the end of Year 2 in this subject. Past work in writing indicates that pupils are close to reaching the levels expected. Pupils do not always read fluently, but enjoy reading their books.
- Historically, boys have done less well than girls in their attainment and progress. The school provides 'boy-friendly' work that has improved the boys' interest in learning and is starting to help improve their progress.

The early years provision

is good

- The good provision has been maintained since the previous inspection. The clear focus of leaders to make children's start to school as positive as possible results in good provision in this part of the school. The large majority of children are below the levels typical for their age when they join the early years provision. They make good progress during their time in the Nursery and Reception classes. In the last two years, most have been well prepared for the next stage of their education because they have been working at the levels typical for their age by the time they joined Year 1.
- The children's achievement is good because they do well in most areas of learning, although attainment in reading lags behind the other areas. Phonics (the sounds letters make) are being taught in a more systematic and rigorous way than in the past to tackle this issue. Occasionally, children do not practise and extend their reading skills when they work on activities they have chosen for themselves.
- Good leadership and management are ensuring that members of staff provide the right learning for children of differing abilities. There is a wealth of interesting and purposeful activities indoors and outside. For example, during the inspection children in the Nursery learned about numbers and colours when searching for imaginary dinosaur eggs in the sand tray. Children in the Reception class were fascinated to explore the properties of materials such as salt and ice.
- Teaching is good. Teachers and teaching assistants are enthusiastic and work together effectively, forming good relationships with the children. They ask good questions to encourage the children to discuss their learning. Behaviour is managed well and children are fully aware of class routines and rules, such as sitting up to show that they are listening to the teacher.
- Behaviour and safety are good because children feel safe and know how to stay safe in the calm environment that is established. Children cooperate with each other and become confident about making choices about their work. They are motivated to learn because they find the tasks are exciting and hold their attention well. They learn to appreciate the needs of others. For example, in the Nursery, children understood why they should look after the dinosaur eggs carefully: 'If we put her eggs in here (a soft nest) she will be very happy.'

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 | 118754 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 462411 |

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 | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 245 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Majeks Walker |
| Headteacher | Amanda McGarrigle |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1–2 May 2013 |
| Telephone number | 01322 665212 |
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