

St Mary's Primary School, Dilwyn

St Mary's Primary School, Dilwyn, HR4 8HR

Inspection dates 11–12 February and 23 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Require improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Require improvement	3
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 school that requires improvement

- Governors and leaders are not well enough trained and supported to ensure that some school policies, including on safeguarding, are swiftly updated to reflect changing legislation and current best practice.
- The school's procedures for communicating safeguarding concerns with outside agencies lack sufficient clarity and rigour. As a result, advice has not been consistently sought from the local authority's statutory safeguarding team.
- Teachers do not always ask enough of more-able pupils, either in the challenge of class activities or in setting clear expectations through their marking of how work can be improved.
- Not enough is made of the outdoor area to develop the personal, social, emotional and physical skills of children in Reception.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is successfully realising its vision for promoting good achievement, caring values and an enjoyable education for all.
- Leaders, staff, pupils and parents are passionately committed to the school's success. Parents have a high regard for the work of the school.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Their excellent attendance confirms how much they love coming to school.
- Pupils have great pride in their school, and participate with much enthusiasm in a wide range of activities beyond the classroom.
- Pupils feel safe and their parents agree.
- Pupils make good progress; their thirst for learning is stimulated by a rich curriculum which develops their enquiring minds, for example in science experiments and history field trips.
- Pupils are well taught by their class teachers, and hone their skills further by learning from the expertise of specialist teachers in many subjects and activities.
- Pupils who find learning difficult, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs, receive very close support in the development of their basic skills from teachers and teaching assistants. As a result, some make excellent progress, especially in their reading.
- Children make a good start in the Reception class, especially in their reading, writing and number skills.
- Governors are rigorous in their scrutiny of the quality of teaching and hold leaders to account for the achievement of pupils.
- The principal, governors and trustees have managed their resources exceptionally well to enable the school to go forward with confidence.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in all classes over seven lessons, including one joint observation with the principal. He looked at pupils' books and heard pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2 read. He also attended a whole-school assembly.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and trustees, and school staff and leaders. Informal discussions also took place with staff and pupils, including in the playground during lunchtime and breaktime.
- The inspector took account of 19 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire to provide evidence for the inspection, alongside the school's own survey of parents and carers. Discussions were also held with parents before the start of the school day. Six staff questionnaire responses were also considered.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation, including assessment records, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, its safeguarding policies, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Ofsted received information, after the initial two days of the inspection, about the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils. This meant that the inspector returned to the school to consider this information on 23 April 2015.

Inspection team

Ian Hodgkinson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's Primary School, Dilwyn, opened as a free school in January 2013. Its predecessor school, of the same name, had opened as a volunteer-run independent school in September 2011, following the closure of the village primary school. That predecessor school was judged good in its inspection of April 2012.
- The school is administered by an independent charitable trust, and is housed in the original school's buildings, owned by the local church trust. As a church school, it is a member of the Hereford Diocesan Schools Trust.
- The school is much smaller than the average primary school, though its numbers on roll have trebled since opening. The majority of pupils have joined the school from other schools.
- Most pupils are White British. A very few pupils are of minority ethnic, mainly Polish, heritage, and speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported through the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after in public care) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school is organised into three mixed-age classes. Early years provision is in the form of a small full-time Reception-aged group which shares a class with Key Stage 1 pupils. There is one class for Years 3 and 4, and one for Years 5 and 6.
- The government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress, do not apply to schools of this small size.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve leadership and management by:
 - strengthening arrangements to support and train governors in keeping school policies and procedures fully up-to-date with key changes in statutory requirements and guidance on best practice, including in safeguarding arrangements
 - ensuring that the training for the designated safeguarding lead and the deputy safeguarding lead is always undertaken at required intervals
 - strengthening formal procedures to involve key staff and external agencies, including the local authority's statutory safeguarding team, in deciding when further intervention is required where possible safeguarding issues have been identified
 - revising the school's systems for logging behavioural incidents to allow clearer tracking of trends and concerns.
- Further improve teaching and accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring that lesson activities consistently challenge more-able pupils to deepen and extend their thinking and understanding
 - ensuring that teachers' marking consistently shows pupils how they could make their work better, and that pupils in all classes respond systematically by making corrections or improvements
 - setting targets where appropriate for the personal, social, emotional and physical development of Reception-aged children that enable staff to guide them more purposefully in independent activities, especially in their outdoor learning.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved, with a special focus on governor's responsibilities for safeguarding.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils reflect the latest statutory guidance and best practice. While staff are quick to identify concerns for pupils' safety and well-being, procedures for communicating these concerns between leaders and external agencies, including the local authority are not sufficiently clear. As a result, the school has not always promptly sought advice from the local authority's statutory safeguarding team.
- The weaknesses in safeguarding procedures have arisen in large part because the high-level training for the designated safeguarding lead, in this case the principal, and that of his deputy, has not been updated appropriately. Nonetheless, recent training for the whole staff has taken account of the requirements of the government's *Keeping Children Safe in Education* statutory guidance. Such training, held at the start of each term, helps staff to spot and understand risks, and leaders can point to clear examples of where quick and appropriate action has been taken. As a result, there have been no serious ongoing concerns about pupils' safety.
- The school was born out of the determination of the village to keep its primary school, and the dedication of those, including the principal, staff, governors, trustees, parents and carers, who have freely given their own time and skills to its continuation.
- The principal's vision, widely shared across the school community, is for a school where pupils achieve well and fully enjoy all aspects of a well-rounded education. The curriculum therefore has a strong emphasis on developing pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills, and is enriched by many opportunities for pupils to enquire and find out things for themselves. In science, for example, pupils enjoy a practical approach where they test their hypotheses with experiments and surveys; and pupils learn and write at length about history following field trips to sites of historic interest.
- A strong emphasis on developing pupils' skills and interest in reading permeates the curriculum in all years, and many parents told the inspector how much progress their children had made in reading since joining the school. The stock of books readily available in each classroom is large and appeals to boys and girls alike. Teachers and teaching assistants frequently listen to each pupil read, and carefully record and track their progress.
- The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education and to play a constructive role in society as active citizens. It promotes well pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils take the house system very seriously and are keen to accumulate points, for example for good attitudes and sporting success. House captains play a prominent role in the School Council which meets monthly and discusses pupils' wide involvement in charitable activities. Pupils learn about different faiths within the religious education curriculum, although there is not a coherent plan to promote pupils' wider understanding of cultural diversity in the United Kingdom through other subjects and activities.
- The school spends its primary sports premium funding very effectively in promoting pupils' wide participation in a range of sporting activities and on training for key staff. For a very small school, it achieves good success in local sports competitions. Its swimming programme is a particular strength. The school also has a rich provision for music and dance, delivered by specialist teachers, which enables all pupils to play and perform.
- Pupils' academic progress is tracked closely from their point of entry into the school. Those who join the school with particular literacy or numeracy weaknesses, including disabled pupils and those with special education needs, are given well focused individual attention. The results of specific interventions are carefully monitored to adjust provision as necessary.
- The close attention given to monitoring pupils' progress and personal development ensures that pupils of all backgrounds are given equal opportunities to succeed. The pupil premium is well used to provide successful support for targeted pupils in and out of the classroom, and to enable all pupils to participate in

school trips and visits. Discrimination is countered by the school's promotion of strong values of tolerance and mutual respect.

- The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well because leaders, including governors, monitor pupils' progress carefully and visit classrooms to check on the quality of provision. The school's improvement plans have been highly effective in establishing a successful school in a short time and are kept under review.
- The performance of leaders and staff is managed rigorously against clear targets for the school's development and pupils' outcomes. Any underperformance is swiftly addressed. Lead teachers in overall charge of the school's three classes play an effective leadership role in curriculum delivery, design and assessment. Specialist teachers in a range of subjects, including in mathematics, successfully complement the work of the lead teachers.
- The school has received regular external monitoring and support from the Department for Education to guide its early development, but this has been insufficiently focused on ensuring that safeguarding procedures are sufficiently robust. The school participates constructively in networks of local schools for sporting competitions, and with secondary schools to support aspects of the curriculum. The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator has very close working links with the local playgroup, from which most Reception-aged children are drawn, to ensure a continuity in provision. The local authority has provided constructive support in the moderation of assessments in the Reception class and Key Stage 2.
- Very close and constructive relationships exist between school staff and most parents and carers. Parents find staff readily accessible at the start and end of the school day, and value the regular information they receive on their children's progress.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance requires improvement. Governors are well aware of their general roles and responsibilities, but have not had regular training to keep themselves up-to-date with key changes and developments in education. There is presently no clerk of governors to identify the key information that governors need to know. Governors have been slow to update policies and procedures on safeguarding to reflect changes in the law and best practice, although they did take positive action to make improvements in this regard the light of the findings of the first inspection visit in February 2015.
- Governors have fulfilled their statutory responsibilities to ensure that required checks have been made on staff and volunteers who work at the school.
- Governors are highly supportive and take a deep interest in the running of the school. The Chair of Governors and Chair of Trustees have both been prominent in the establishment of the school in its present form.
- Governors visit the school regularly, including visits to lessons and participation in school activities. They use a range of information to check on the quality of teaching, and ensure that staff pay is linked closely to performance.
- Resources have been very carefully managed to establish a successful school that has quickly exceeded its forecasts for growth in pupil numbers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils have a love of learning, which is stimulated by the active and enquiry-based approaches taken to learning in many of their lessons. For example, pupils who had struggled in the past with basic literacy and numeracy skills spoke of their joy in reading fluently, or recognising relationships between fractions and percentages.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very constructive and each pupil feels valued, so that they develop considerable maturity and self-confidence in contributing their views in meetings, lessons and assemblies.

- Pupils are very polite and courteous to visitors, and wear their uniform smartly. They are proud to represent the school in teams and activities.
- Nearly all parents and pupils speak very highly about pupils' positive behaviour. There are very few instances of poor behaviour in class. Outside lessons, pupils are well ordered in moving around the small school and getting their lunches and snacks. They collaborate well in lessons and pupils of all ages play energetically together at breaktimes.
- Pupils' enjoyment in coming to school is reflected in their very high rates of attendance, including many who have not been absent at all. No pupils are persistently absent.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. The procedures for communicating safeguarding concerns, both between staff and governors within the school and with external agencies, have shortcomings. For example, there is insufficient formal scrutiny by leaders of decisions by the designated safeguarding lead, in this case the principal, about whether concerns are serious enough to report to the local authority's statutory safeguarding team. While the very few bullying or behaviour incidents are logged comprehensively on individual pupils' files, there is no mechanism for tracking different types of incidents or reported bullying to help leaders identify or act upon any emerging trends.
- Although there are weaknesses in formal safeguarding procedures, an ethos of care for the well-being of pupils permeates the school. Staff and governors carefully check the safety of the school site and activities. One pupil said: 'The best thing about this school is that people care so much about each other'. Pupils and parents are overwhelmingly of the view that pupils feel safe in the school, and that staff provide a very caring environment.
- Pupils are increasingly aware of different types of bullying and how to guard against it. Older pupils know about cyber-bullying, gained mainly from a special focus day at a local secondary school.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils very well in this small school. They make effective use of assessment information, including when new pupils join the school, to help shape the provision to meet pupils' needs. This is particularly the case for those pupils who are not initially achieving as well as expected for their age in English or mathematics, including for those who are disabled or who have special educational needs. As a result, pupils make at least good progress in the development of their basic skills and especially in reading, often in a short time.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together, including in the Reception group, to monitor the progress of pupils who find some aspects of learning difficult, and adapt provision where appropriate. Pupils' books and reading records show detailed and regular checks are made, with clear strategies and targets devised to help pupils improve.
- Work is not always adapted as effectively for more-able pupils. In lessons, sometimes these pupils are not moved to more challenging activities quickly enough, and very occasionally have to wait for others to finish. Whereas teachers' marking in the Year 5 and 6 class systematically ask more-able pupils to develop their work to reach higher levels, this is not the case across the school.
- Teachers' subject expertise is a key strength in promoting pupils' interests and skills. Specialists in a range of subjects, including mathematics, science, French, music, dance, and religious education, broaden pupils' knowledge, help them to think deeply about their subjects and work with precision.
- Teachers manage their classes well, distributing questions to ensure that all can articulate their views and play a part in class discussions. Teachers use a range of resources inside the classroom and outside in fieldwork to stimulate pupils' sense of enquiry and desire to find out more about the world around them. Homework activities for older pupils further promote pupils' skills of independence in learning.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics and develop well-rounded understanding and skills in many other subjects, including science, arts and the humanities. While knowledge in these subjects is developed through discrete lessons, pupils basic skills of literacy, numeracy and use of information and communication technology are applied and developed in all areas. Pupils therefore have many opportunities to write at length, and apply mathematical skills regularly, for example in measuring and data analysis in science.
- There were too few pupils in 2014 to compare the school's results in national assessments at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 meaningfully with those of pupils nationally. Inspection evidence including the school's assessment data currently suggests that nearly all eight pupils in Year 6 are on course to at least meet the nationally expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics and a substantial number are exceeding this.
- The very small number of disadvantaged pupils does not allow any overall statistical analysis of their performance, but they have made good progress overall, and in some cases rapid progress, to reach at least the standards expected for their age.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve particularly well because provision is carefully designed to meet those needs and progress is regularly tracked, monitored and adjusted as necessary. In particular, the school regularly and rigorously tests pupils' reading to ensure that where reading ages are below chronological ages, action is taken so that rapid gains can be made over a short period of time. The phonics programme is relatively new to the school, but younger pupils especially have good skills in using the sounds letters make to help them to read more difficult words.
- From an early age, good attention is given to the development of pupils' handwriting so that they form letters neatly and legibly. Some pupils' writing does not improve as rapidly as others; one reason for this is that the teacher makes corrections for them without asking the pupils to improve their work for themselves. Overall standards of presentation are also variable.
- The most able pupils benefit from a curriculum which stimulates their enquiry and independence, and some make rapid progress as a consequence. Good examples seen included some challenging problem-solving work in mathematics, with pupils developing multi-stage solutions based on secure understanding of fractions and percentages. However, not all are consistently challenged through activities in class or teachers' comments to deepen and extend their learning.

The early years provision is good

- The group of Reception-aged children is very small, and their individual characteristics on joining the school vary widely. Numbers completing their Reception year in 2014 were too small to compare meaningfully with national average for good levels of development.
- Staff skilfully integrate children into the larger Key Stage 1 class. Reception-aged children are enthused by joining in whole-class activities related to the learning themes, including singing and sharing of work. For much of the day, however, the group works discretely under the direction of specialist teaching assistants and the supervision of the class teacher. Children behave well, and focus well on the tasks they are given.
- Children make good progress in the development of their basic literacy and mathematical skills to ensure that they are ready for Year 1. The phonics programme successfully enables children to recognise the sounds letters make, and they quickly learn to form these letters themselves. Their well organised and well presented 'Learning Journeys' reflect the good attention given to pencil control in shaping letters and moving to writing sentences. Children have confidence in counting and can very precisely identify different shapes.

- The Reception provision is well led and developing rapidly. Staff work closely with the local playgroup to build children's confidence in coming to school and enable them to settle in. Staff also liaise with the playgroup to help assess children's skills on entry. Assessments of children's progress and attainment are regular and accurate, and externally moderated by the local authority.

- Children are given helpful targets for their development, which are regularly updated in 'Wish Books' that are shared with parents and record evidence of progress against these targets. These targets focus largely on developing children's literacy and mathematical skills, and not as sharply on their personal, social, emotional and physical attributes, which for some are less well developed areas. Children are not always sufficiently well guided to develop these attributes in their independent, 'free-flow' time, especially in the outdoor area.

- Links with parents and carers are well-developed. Parents are kept well-informed of their children's progress.

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	139241
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	447858

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Madeleine Spinks
Principal	Peter Kyles
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
Telephone number	01544 318277
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