

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Northwood Road, Whitstable, CT5 2EY

**Inspection dates** 7–8 May 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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.

- Leaders, managers and governors have worked together effectively to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Governors, under the strong leadership of the new Chair of the Governing Body, now support and challenge senior leaders robustly.
- Partnerships with parents are good. Parents make a positive contribution to pupils' achievement, especially in the early years.
- Pupils usually have conscientious attitudes towards learning in lessons, and this supports their good progress.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school, and this is reflected in their good attendance.
- Most teaching is at least good across the school, and some is outstanding. This contributes significantly to pupils' achievement.
- Good quality marking and feedback help pupils to know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Expectations of presentation and handwriting are consistently high, and pupils are encouraged to take great pride in their work.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress. By the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils' attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their starting points because teaching is closely tailored to their individual needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. The gaps between their achievement and that of their peers in school and nationally are now closing.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is distinctive so that pupils are well prepared to become good citizens in modern Britain.
- Children in the early years make good progress across the year.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The overall quality of teaching is not yet outstanding. Not all teachers offer pupils, especially the most able, the high levels of challenge found in some classes.
- Homework does not always build effectively on learning in class. Teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement in homework are not always high enough, and the marking of it is inconsistent.
- The small outdoor classroom and other outside areas and resources used by children in the early years are not always used to best effect or well maintained.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 27 lessons or parts of lessons. The headteacher and senior leaders completed several joint observations with the inspectors.
- The behaviour and attitudes of pupils were observed during lessons, at break times and lunchtime, and in an assembly.
- Pupils' work in reading, writing and mathematics, including that found in some topic work, and homework were scrutinised.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils, including a group from Year 6, and heard pupils in Years 2 and 6 read.
- Meetings were held with leaders and managers, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met parents at the beginning of the day and considered 80 responses to the online survey, Parent View. They also considered responses to the 39 questionnaires completed by staff, together with the contents of a number of letters received from parents and staff.
- Documents reviewed included the school's checks on its performance summary and plans for improvement; arrangements for safeguarding pupils; behaviour and attendance records; and governing body minutes.

## Inspection team

Angela Konarzewski, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Nicholas Rudman	Additional inspector
Robin Gaff	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a much larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- Children attend the early years provision in the Reception class full time from September each year.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, and the proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds who speak English as an additional language is very small.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is much lower than that found nationally. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The senior leadership team has been restructured with the appointment of a new deputy headteacher, a director of progress and an additional educational needs coordinator. Governance has been restructured under the leadership of a new Chair of the Governing Body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to match the best in the school by ensuring that all teachers:
  - have consistently high expectations of what pupils, especially the most able, can achieve
  - set homework that builds effectively on pupils' prior learning in lessons, and mark it in line with the school's marking policy
  - have opportunities to learn from the excellent practice that already exists in the school.
- Improve the quality of provision for children in the early years outdoor areas by ensuring that:
  - the limited space allocated as an outdoor classroom is used to best effect to promote children's opportunities for learning outdoors
  - all outdoor equipment and resources are organised well and kept in good condition.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The high expectations of leaders and managers have resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching and in pupils' achievement. Leaders now rigorously and regularly check on the quality of teaching and manage the performance of all staff effectively, ensuring that they know what is expected of them.
- The local authority has also provided high quality support that has had a positive impact on the improvement journey the school has taken over the past two years.
- Some middle leaders are new to their roles, but they are being effectively mentored by senior leaders to ensure that they are having a positive impact on improvements in the subjects they lead. The newly appointed additional educational needs coordinator has been particularly effective in improving the provision and outcomes for pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs, and for pupils who are disadvantaged.
- Plans for the delivery of the new National Curriculum are well under way, including developing mastery in mathematics through reasoning and problem solving. The school has devised creative ways of teaching the foundation subjects through cross-curricular topic work. For example, in a Year 2 geography lesson, pupils were learning about mapping skills by studying the map of an island that is the setting for a story book they have been reading. In addition, French, music and physical education are also well taught.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. British values are emphasised and are well embedded in pupils' minds. Although the vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, diversity is celebrated and the school has recently formed an alliance with an orphanage in India. As a result, the school promotes equality of opportunity, fosters good relations and tackles discrimination well. Pupils are well prepared to become good citizens in modern Britain.
- The pupil premium funding is spent wisely to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make progress that is at least as good as that of their peers. Gaps between their achievement and that of their peers in school and nationally have narrowed this year.
- The primary sports funding is also spent effectively on employing a specialist physical education instructor to train and improve the practice of teachers and develop their confidence. This has led to an increased participation in sports by many pupils who are now able to attend an expanding range of sports clubs run by staff. Some funding is also used to support the swimming programme and ensure that all pupils can swim 25 metres by the time they leave the school.
- The school communicates well with parents, including through its website, and almost all who responded on Parent View said they would recommend the school to others. Several parents wrote letters to the inspectors in praise of the school's work. One parent wrote, 'We couldn't be happier with St Mary's School; it is helping to shape our son into a happy, well-educated and confident young man.'
- The school's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and are effective.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The ambitious new Chair of the Governing Body leads a strong and effective team. Its members are rigorous in holding senior leaders to account for the quality of teaching and the standard of pupils' work. They check that performance management arrangements are used effectively to support and reward staff, and they understand how underperformance is tackled. They scrutinise information about pupils' achievement carefully and in detail, and compare this with national data. They challenge leaders where they consider that pupils could do better, for example, disadvantaged pupils who were not doing as well as their peers last year. Governors are aware of weaknesses in the school, most of which have now been addressed. Their expectations are high.
  - Governors compare their performance against national and local benchmarks, and are conscious of the need to provide value for money.
  - Governors have undertaken extensive safeguarding training, including in safer recruitment and child protection. They ensure that pupils are properly safeguarded and recently carried out an audit of the school's arrangements. They respond quickly when any concerns are raised.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is evidenced in the detailed log that records all behaviour-related incidents and how they have been followed up, including the involvement of parents.
- Pupils take pride in their work, in their achievement and in their school. In almost all lessons, they demonstrate positive attitudes to learning which contribute well to their progress. However, in a few lessons, where the most-able pupils are not consistently appropriately challenged, they occasionally lose concentration.
- Pupils are courteous and respectful towards adults and towards each other. They greet visitors with friendly smiles and make polite conversation. Their confident attitudes are underpinned by the active promotion of British values through assemblies, together with the strong ethos of respect.
- Pupils have exceptionally high expectations of one another, and inspectors agree with almost all the parents who responded on Parent View, that behaviour is good.
- Pupils' attendance is consistently above the national average, indicating that pupils enjoy coming to school. The attendance of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and of disadvantaged pupils, has improved since last year, when it was lower than that of other pupils. This has contributed to their improved achievement.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Staff supervise pupils well and keep them safe at school. The school grounds are safe and secure.
- The school teaches pupils how to guard against all types of bullying, and there is an anti-bullying week held annually. They know about cyber-bullying of all kinds and have designed posters warning of the dangers of the internet. Although pupils say they have very limited experience of racism or homophobic bullying, they understand what it is and know it is wrong.
- Pupils say they feel safe and almost all parents who responded on Parent View believe that the school keeps their children safe.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Teaching in the school has strongly improved since the time of the last inspection. Most is now good and some is outstanding, consistently so in Years 2 and 6 where teachers display excellent subject knowledge and high expectations of all pupils. As a result, pupils' achievement across the school, especially in English and mathematics, has improved significantly.
- Phonics (linking letters to the sounds they make) is well taught right from the start in Reception, and results in the Year 1 phonics screening check are above the national average. Teaching assistants as well as teachers reinforce the accurate application of phonics skills, so that by the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, attainment in reading and writing is well above the national average.
- While most teachers challenge pupils of all abilities to do their best, in a few classes teachers do not provide sufficient challenge, most notably for the most-able pupils. At such times, pupils lose interest and start to talk about matters unrelated to their learning, thus wasting time.
- The impact of the revised marking policy on pupils' progress is impressive. Workbooks, especially in writing and mathematics, are now thoroughly marked by all teachers using a code that pupils understand well. Feedback is detailed and gives appropriate advice on next steps. Pupils usually read and respond appropriately to the teachers' comments and, as a result, their progress accelerates.
- Skilled teaching assistants are deployed well to teach and support pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and disadvantaged pupils. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- A specialist teacher has been deployed effectively to boost pupils' achievement in mathematics, including that of disadvantaged pupils.
- Homework does not always build effectively on learning in lessons. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve at home are sometimes too low, and homework is generally not as thoroughly marked as work completed in school.
- Almost all parents who responded on Parent View believe their child is well taught, and pupils who were asked about the quality of teaching at the school agree.

**The achievement of pupils** is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved because of improvements in the quality of teaching. Pupils currently in the school are making good progress in all subjects in each key stage, with significant proportions making rapid progress.
- As in 2014, pupils are on track to attain test results that are above the national average at the end of Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 2, where pupils' attainment has been above the national average for the last two years, school tracking indicates that pupils' attainment is set to be even higher this year, especially in reading and mathematics.
- In 2014, attainment in mathematics was not as high as that in reading and writing at the end of Year 2 or Year 6. However, changes made to the mathematics curriculum this year and improved quality of teaching, including the deployment of specialist mathematics teacher, have ensured that standards in mathematics have risen. This improvement is enhanced by excellent knowledge of times tables displayed by pupils, most notably in a Year 4 class during the inspection.
- Although the most-able pupils are not always challenged enough in all classes, the proportions attaining the higher levels by the end of Years 2 and 6 are above average.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is as a result of the carefully tailored provision that meets their needs well.
- The school is successfully improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. In the 2014 national tests at the end of Year 6, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was approximately two and a half years behind that of their peers in school in mathematics, one year behind in reading, and one and a half years in writing. Their attainment was also below that of others nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils was not faster than others nationally in 2014 so the wide gaps between their attainment and that of others nationally did not close between 2013 and 2014, and they widened in mathematics. However, as a result of significant measures put into place to address the underachievement of disadvantaged pupils this year, the school is successfully narrowing these gaps overall, ensuring accelerated progress for all disadvantaged pupils across the school, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils develop their handwriting skills early in Key Stage 1 and most are able to write in neat, joined handwriting by the end of Year 2. This also improves their spelling.
- Workbooks seen during the inspection displayed good standards of presentation and handwriting, and good development of English, grammar, punctuation and spelling skills. Pupils evidently take great pride in their workbooks.

**The early years provision** is good

- Children join the Reception year with levels of skill and understanding that are broadly typical for their age. They learn quickly and make good progress so that, by the time they leave Reception, almost all reach a good level of development and so are well prepared for Year 1.
- Accurate assessments of children reveal if any child is falling behind, so that targeted support can quickly be put into place. As a result, different groups of children, including those who have special educational needs and disadvantaged children, make good progress and achieve well.
- Phonics skills are well taught and both boys and girls make equally fast progress in developing their skills for reading and writing. They write for real purposes and audiences, and all learning is set into meaningful contexts for them.
- The context for children's learning is often initiated by the children themselves. This ensures their engagement and motivation, and facilitates good opportunities to maximise their achievement. They particularly enjoy learning firsthand about life and living things in the garden area, and opportunities for free-flow activities indoors and outside in the small outdoor classroom.
- Children generally behave well and pay good attention to one another's safety. When equipment has to be shared, for example wheeled toys, children wait patiently for their turn, occupying themselves with other activities while doing so.
- Parents make a significant contribution to the initial assessments of children's starting points when they start school. They support their children's learning very effectively and are kept well informed about their progress across the year.
- Personal learning journals provide an impressive body of evidence of the progress each child makes across

the seven areas of learning. Photographs, samples of writing, number work and pictures are all carefully annotated and stored neatly. Teachers and children alike are extremely proud of these records of the experiences and 'wow' moments in the children's first year at school.

- Effective leadership of the early years has led to improvements in children's achievement. However, provision in the outdoor area does not promote good opportunities for children to learn outdoors, especially in the small outdoor classroom. Equipment and resources are not always well organised and kept in good condition.

## 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>	118759
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	462407
<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>	416
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andrew Wilson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elizabeth Leaman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15–16 May 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01227 272692
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