

St Mary's Church of England School

Keen Close, Fairford Leys, Aylesbury, HP19 7WF

Inspection dates 7–8 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- The headteacher, other leaders, staff and governors have improved teaching, pupils' achievement and behaviour since the previous inspection.
- Leaders and staff work well together in bringing about improvement.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They show positive attitudes to learning.
- There are effective procedures to ensure that pupils are safe. As a result, pupils feel safe and well looked after by staff.
- Pupils are courteous, friendly, helpful, and show respect for others. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Improved teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement.
- Teaching is good. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have been lifted since the previous inspection. Pupils respond well to teachers' clear guidance, explanations and questions.
- The good provision in Reception has been maintained and built on since the previous inspection. Children make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Good progress continues in Years 1 and 2.
- Pupils are now achieving well in Years 3 to 6.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few classes, work does not challenge pupils of all abilities at the right level. It is too easy for some and too difficult for others.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills in subjects other than English.
- There are some inconsistencies in the marking of pupils' work in mathematics.
- Communication with parents is not effective enough, particularly information about their children's progress, staff changes and how the school deals with concerns.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in all classes. A few lessons were seen jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and the information about their attainment and progress was analysed.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other staff, representatives from the local authority, the governors, parents and pupils.
- The inspector took account of the 126 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors took account of 33 questionnaire returns from staff..
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including school policies, safeguarding procedures and the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lynn Lowery	Additional Inspector
Raminder Arora	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- Most of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- A well below average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2014, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The children in the Reception classes attend full time.
- There have been numerous staff changes recently. The deputy headteacher and some key subject leaders took up their posts in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen elements of teaching to ensure that pupils in all classes make good progress and further raise attainment by the end of Year 6 by:
 - ensuring that all work set is at the right level of difficulty for pupils
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills and write high-quality pieces in subjects other than English
 - ensuring that, in all classes, teachers' marking in mathematics helps pupils to improve.
- Strengthen leadership and improve the communication and the partnership with parents by:
 - seeking their views and taking steps to tackle their concerns
 - communicating changes and improvements to them clearly.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, other leaders and staff have brought about good improvements since the previous inspection. Positive action has been taken to raise pupils' achievement and to improve teaching in Years 3 to 6. There have also been improvements to pupils' behaviour.
- Leaders and staff work together to improve the learning experiences for pupils. As a result, pupils are now achieving well in Years 3 to 6, as well as in Years 1 and 2 and in the early years.
- Through systematic review, leaders have a clear understanding of what the school does well and what areas require further improvement. The findings of review are used well to plan for improvement.
- New subject leaders have settled well into their role. The leadership of English, mathematics, special educational needs and the early years provision is effective. Leaders are fully engaged in checking pupils' achievement and improving it in their areas of responsibility.
- The leadership and management of teaching are effective. Improving teaching has been the key factor in bringing about better progress. Senior leaders and the local authority regularly check teaching. Arrangements for the management of teachers' performance help to improve the quality of teaching. Targets for development are well focused on pupils' progress. Newly qualified teachers receive good support from experienced colleagues.
- Safeguarding procedures have been strengthened. Leaders and staff make sure that pupils are well behaved and safe. As a result, pupils feel safe and are well looked after by the staff. Safeguarding is effective and all statutory requirements are met.
- The school successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders and staff promote the school's values which include compassion, forgiveness, hope, respect and trust. These values are supported by golden rules which foster kindness, listening to others, being helpful, working hard and looking after property. Pupils develop an understanding of different cultures and religions. They are well prepared for their next school and for life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum provides a broad and interesting range of subjects which enables pupils to achieve well. The implementation of a reading and writing programme is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. However, pupils' writing in subjects other than English is not consistently good across the school.
- There are effective systems for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress. The development of assessments without National Curriculum levels is at an early stage.
- All forms of discrimination are tackled effectively. All pupils have full and equal access to the learning activities on offer. Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide disadvantaged pupils with additional support in reading, writing and numeracy. There are effective approaches to help ensure that pupils in danger of falling behind are well provided for.
- The primary sport grant is used appropriately to extend pupils' opportunities for sport and physical development. Specialist coaches and teachers of physical education provide good teaching for pupils and training for staff. Pupils participate enthusiastically in extra sports clubs and in competitive sports against local schools.
- Since the previous inspection, the local authority has provided good advice and support. The impact of local authority support shows in stronger teaching and achievement. Through regular visits, the local authority has an accurate overview of the school's performance and how the school has improved.
- A number of parents do not believe that communication is effective enough, particularly information about their children's progress and staff changes. Some of these concerns are justified. For example, evenings for parents to discuss their child's progress with staff in some classes were cancelled in the spring term because of staff absence, but have not been rearranged. Senior leaders and governors are keen to strengthen the work with parents.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governance of the school is effective.
 - Members of the governing body are supportive and provide appropriate challenge to hold school leaders to account. They have ambition and high expectations for the school.
 - Through analysing the school's data, they have a good understanding of pupils' attainment and progress and how it compares with pupils elsewhere.. Governors check that pupils' achievement is improving, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
 - Governors have a clear overview of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress. They understand requirements relating to the management of staff performance and ensure that promotion

and pay awards are based on the progress that pupils make.

- They ensure that effective action is taken to improve teaching that is less than good.
- Governors ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively and check the impact of spending on pupils' achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Effective steps have been taken to improve behaviour since the previous inspection and this has had a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement.
- Pupils say they enjoy school and their attendance is above average.
- In lessons, pupils are attentive, cooperative and show positive attitudes to learning. They are well behaved in the classroom and around the school. In a few classes, especially in Year 6, pupils are highly motivated and their behaviour is impeccable.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are occasionally less positive when teaching does not fully engage them and the work set is not at the right level of difficulty, which is why behaviour is not outstanding. There are a few pupils with behavioural difficulties, but these individuals are generally well managed and supported by staff.
- In their day-to-day learning and play, pupils demonstrate the qualities and values promoted by the staff. They are courteous, friendly and respectful to others. They show an appreciation and a clear understanding of different faiths.
- Pupils willingly take on additional responsibilities, such as serving on the school council, being house captains or road safety officers. They raise funds for a range of local, national and international charities to help those less well off than themselves.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has improved its policy and procedures for e-safety and the recording of incidents, including bullying.
- The school has an appropriate range of safeguarding policies which are regularly reviewed. Leaders and staff take effective measures to ensure that all pupils are well cared for and protected.
- All staff have had recent training in safeguarding pupils. Robust security checks are carried out before staff are appointed to the school.
- Leaders and staff carry out regular risk assessments to make sure that the school accommodation and the site are safe. The school is, therefore, a safe place for pupils to learn and develop.
- Discussions with pupils and the school's records indicate that bullying in the school is rare. Pupils show a clear understanding of bullying and the different forms it might take, including persistent name calling and cyber bullying. They report that, should bullying occur, it is quickly dealt with.
- Pupils say that they are safe at school and well looked after by the staff.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Improvements to teaching, particularly in Years 3 to 6, have been the key to raising pupils' achievement. Teaching is promoting good progress for different groups of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have eliminated most of the weaknesses in teaching identified in the previous inspection. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and how they should behave are higher. The work set for pupils is mostly more challenging and engaging. The marking of pupils' work has improved, particularly the marking of writing. Teachers identify good work and provide clear pointers to guide improvement.
- Occasionally, work is not set at the right level of difficulty for pupils. It can be too difficult for some and too easy for others.
- Teachers' clear explanations and instructions promote good learning for pupils. Questioning is used effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and to check how well pupils have understood the work.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well taught. They receive support and work is well suited to their needs.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) is highly effective and has a positive

impact on pupils' progress in this area of reading. Teachers promote enjoyment of reading and use interesting literature to develop pupils' reading skills.

- Pupils are given many opportunities to write for different purposes and in different styles in English. Teachers provide clear guidance and demonstration to help pupils improve their writing skills in English. A well-planned approach to the teaching of spelling is having a positive impact on pupils' spelling.
- Opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces in other subjects are not consistently good throughout the school.
- Mathematics is well taught. Teachers use explanations and demonstration well to deepen pupils' understanding of calculation and mathematical operations. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their numeracy skills to solve relevant mathematical problems. There are some inconsistencies in the marking of pupils' work in mathematics. Comments on how pupils can improve their work are less evident.

The achievement of pupils is good

- At the time of the last inspection, pupils' achievement required improvement because not enough pupils were making good progress in Years 3 to 6.
- Leaders and staff have taken effective action to tackle this issue. As a result, pupils are now making good progress in Years 3 to 6.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6, in 2014, was broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. While these pupils made good progress in writing, their progress in reading and mathematics was as expected rather than good. Pupils in the current Year 6 are on course to attain above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The most able pupils are achieving well. By the end of Year 2, in 2014, the proportion of pupils who attained the higher levels was above average, particularly in reading and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, in 2014, a broadly average proportion of pupils attained the upper levels in reading, writing and mathematics. A higher proportion of pupils is on track to reach the higher levels in the current Year 6.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. This is because activities and the support provided are well suited to their specific learning needs.
- In 2014, the few Year 6 pupils supported by the pupil premium attained lower standards than their classmates. They were about 10 months behind in writing, eight months in reading and four months in mathematics.
- When compared with pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils at St Mary's were about 10 months behind in writing and about eight months in reading and mathematics. However, these results were adversely affected by disadvantaged pupils joining the school later. Current data show that most disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and that gaps in attainment are closing.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. The proportions of pupils who reached the nationally expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check were above average in 2013 and outcomes further improved in 2014. By Year 6, pupils apply reading skills well in examining challenging and interesting texts. For example, pupils in a Year 6 group made rapid progress in comparing the headlines and news of a broadsheet and a red top newspaper.
- Pupils' writing skills are developing well, especially in English lessons. Pupils write for different audiences and in different styles. Spelling and presentation have improved. While there are some good examples of pupils' applying their writing skills in different subjects, this is not consistently good throughout the school. Writing in English lessons is often of better quality and in more detail than in other subjects.
- In mathematics, pupils make good progress. They acquire a secure knowledge and understanding of calculation and mathematical operations. Reasoning and problem solving skills are developing well. For example, pupils in Year 2 used a range of mental and written strategies to solve challenging addition and subtraction problems.

The early years provision**is good**

- Good leadership and management have maintained and built on the provision in the early years since the last inspection. There are effective systems for assessing and recording children's attainment and progress. This information and the interests of the children are used well to plan teaching and an interesting range of learning activities. Staff work well as a team in providing for the children.
- Children are motivated and keen to learn. Adults establish strong relationships with the children and manage them well. There are effective procedures to ensure that children are safe and well cared for. Children relate positively to others and their good behaviour supports their learning well.
- Children start in Reception with knowledge, understanding and skills typically found for their age. All groups make good progress in the areas of learning because of good teaching and the interesting activities provided.
- Good attention is given to developing reading skills, and children make good progress in phonics. They enjoy the attractive books available. They make good progress in early writing skills. Children make good gains in working with number and in solving basic problems. They recognise and name different shapes.
- Just occasionally, the purpose of activities is not clear or the levels of challenge are not suitable for the needs of different groups of children. When this happens, learning is hindered.
- Through their studies, children show a good knowledge of minibeasts. They use their observation skills well in identifying the signs of spring in the school grounds.
- Parents are supportive and make a valuable contribution to their children's learning. They read to them at home and take a keen interest in the topics studied at school. Children are well prepared for Year 1.

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	110416
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	462451

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	413
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Brown
Headteacher	Patricia Gurton
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 May 2013
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