

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Lane, Portbury, Bristol BS20 7TR

Inspection dates	17–18 November 2015
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has improved the quality of teaching and learning considerably. Following the last inspection, she quickly took action to transform the quality of learning and rapidly improve standards.
- Leaders and governors rigorously check the quality of teaching and learning. They use this information to hold teachers firmly to account for pupils' progress and the standards they reach.
- The quality of teaching throughout the school is good. Teachers take care to plan interesting tasks and activities to ensure that pupils make good progress.
- Pupils are proud of their school, behave well and are keen to learn. They appreciate the care taken by their teachers to plan interesting activities and visits linked to their learning.
- The achievement of all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. Pupils make good progress in all classes.
- Leadership of the early years is good. Improvements to the quality of teaching have made a significant difference to standards. In 2015, the majority of children made good progress.
- Governors know the school well. They share the headteacher's aspirations for the school's future. They visit the school regularly and check pupils' learning and achievement closely.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Mathematics teaching is not of a consistently high standard. Not all teachers are as confident in applying the school's approach to reasoning and problem solving, and so some pupils, particularly the most able, do not make the best possible progress.
- Teachers do not always use the information they have about children's progress in early years to plan activities at the right level of challenge.
- Not all pupils have a good understanding of British values.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching and learning in mathematics throughout the school by ensuring that all teachers:
 - plan challenging tasks for all pupils, particularly the most able, in order to deepen their mathematical thinking and develop their problem-solving skills
 - use a consistent approach to questioning to extend pupils' learning in mathematics
 - where necessary, undertake professional development activities so that their practice is as good as the best in the school.
- Improve teaching and learning in the early years by ensuring that teachers:
 - use the information they keep about children's progress to plan precise activities that build on children's previous learning.
- Develop pupils' understanding of British values further, including those relating to aspects of individual liberty and tolerance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher's strong leadership, determination and unrelenting drive have been instrumental in securing rapid improvement in all areas.
- School leaders have successfully established an ethos of professional trust and a willingness among staff to learn from each other in order to secure good-quality learning for pupils. There is a strong commitment to improving teaching, learning and standards from all who work and learn here.
- Middle leaders are developing their roles effectively. They check the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility carefully using a range of monitoring activities. They support each other to identify and plan future subject development.
- The mathematics leader has worked with teachers to agree a school strategy to develop pupils' ability to think about mathematical problems and extend their reasoning capabilities. Staff subject knowledge and understanding in mathematics have been effectively developed through training and advice. Staff are aware of how pupils learn to reason in mathematics but the agreed approach is not yet used effectively in all classrooms.
- The school has developed its own 'Inspire' curriculum, designed to capture the imagination of pupils and ensure that they learn with enthusiasm and interest. Leaders have actively sought the views of parents and pupils in order to evaluate the difference it has made to learning, and responses have been positive. Pupils say that their teachers plan interesting activities and visits, and make learning enjoyable.
- The headteacher and governing body manage the performance of teachers well. Teachers' development targets are directly linked to the achievement of pupils and school priorities. The quality of pupils' learning is checked regularly by school leaders through observation, work analysis and by talking to pupils about their learning. The headteacher reviews the progress of every pupil and holds teachers firmly to account.
- Pupil premium funding is used well. Disadvantaged pupils receive high-quality, personalised support designed to narrow the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. This approach is making a significant difference and the gap is closing quickly.
- Leaders and governors have secured the appointment of a further additional teacher to provide support for most-able pupils and those who need to catch up. The arrangement has been in place for less than one year but has been extremely effective in accelerating the progress of these groups of pupils, particularly in mathematics.
- Extra primary physical education and sport funding has been used to improve the quality and quantity of sport available to all pupils. Sports coaches in gymnastics, dance and football have ensured that there has been a greater level of participation in sports and more opportunities to play competitive sports. Pupils are rightly proud of their participation in an annual local dance festival and, in order to be at performance standard, they enthusiastically rehearse during their lunchbreaks.
- The local authority's link adviser has worked with the school to develop a close collaboration between St Mary's, her own school and other local schools within the cluster. Visits to observe outstanding teaching and work with leading teachers on subject development, funded by the local authority, have strengthened the quality of teaching and learning at St Mary's.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils learn about other cultures through assemblies and visits to places of worship. However, pupils' awareness of some aspects of life in modern Britain is not as strong. For example, even though older pupils are familiar with the current refugee crisis, they are not aware of the extremism and intolerance that has partly caused it.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Parents praise the nurturing family atmosphere and sense of security their children enjoy. They are keen to acknowledge the role of the headteacher in improving behaviour, the quality of teaching and extending opportunities in after-school clubs. One parent said he was 'in awe' of how much the teachers do for all the children.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body knows the school's strengths and areas for improvement well and it is highly effective. Governors' knowledge and understanding are kept up to date by comprehensive reports provided by the headteacher and middle leaders.
 - Governors understand and talk confidently about the achievement of all pupils. Governors have carefully allocated roles which make best use of their skills and experience. This enables them to use their expertise effectively to support and challenge school leaders and hold them to account.

- Governors fully understand how teachers’ pay increases are linked directly to pupils’ outcomes. They consider information provided from reviews of pupils’ progress and the quality of teaching and learning carefully before decisions are made.
- The governing body is working with the headteacher to explore the further improvement and development of the school. This drive and commitment is highly effective in communicating a clear vision for the school, sustaining improvement and securing the school’s future.
- The arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are effective. The governing body is fully aware of its statutory duties with regard to safeguarding and continually checks the effectiveness of procedures. The headteacher and safeguarding governor have completed a recent review of the school’s safeguarding systems and procedures to check that they are rigorous. Detailed documents and records of concern outlining the actions taken by staff confirm that staff vigilance and awareness of safety are high. Governors have undertaken a range of training related to their responsibilities and, together with the headteacher, they have established a strong safeguarding culture.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is good because teachers have excellent relationships with the pupils and have high expectations of their behaviour and attitudes toward learning. Teachers plan activities that excite and engage pupils in their learning and ensure that they want to learn more.
- Pupils readily choose to stretch and challenge themselves because there is a culture of wanting to improve and become better learners. They describe how they choose their learning objectives based on what they already can do and need to do next. In one lesson, pupils were working together to explore the use of pi to work out the area of compound shapes composed of circles. They were fully focused and extended their ability to apply their mathematics to more complex problems, including semi-circles. This collaborative approach to problem solving to develop reasoning and extend learning has been agreed for use throughout the school but is not yet consistently used in all year groups.
- Teachers regularly assess pupils’ attainment and check pupil’s progress alongside the headteacher, and this ensures the quick identification of pupils not making the progress they should. This consistent checking ensures that slower progress is identified and tackled.
- Marking and feedback typically confirm what pupils have done well and how learning might be improved further. The school’s approach to giving pupils feedback is used consistently in all year groups and is well established, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Pupils understand the feedback they are given and even the younger children told the inspector how teachers’ comments help them improve their learning.
- Writing throughout the school and across subjects is taught consistently well. Pupils are excited by the themes they study and write at length for a range of purposes. They make imaginative word choices and challenge themselves to use a wide range of grammar and punctuation to write increasingly complex sentences.
- Some teachers use their subject knowledge and confidence in mathematics to plan activities which extend pupils’ learning through applying what they can already do and tackling increasingly complex problems. However, this agreed approach is not used consistently in all classes and opportunities for pupils to develop reasoning skills and deepen their learning and understanding are limited, particularly for the most able.
- Phonics (the sounds that letters make) is taught well and pupils confidently read aloud using phonics decoding and blending strategies when reading unfamiliar words.
- Teaching and learning support assistants are precisely and effectively deployed. They are highly skilled, work closely with teachers, and support and improve the learning of individual pupils and groups of pupils.
- Parents are provided with many opportunities to be involved in their children’s learning. During the inspection, many parents were positive about homework and the information the school gives to parents in order to help them support and extend learning at home.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils generally take pride in their work, their school and their own achievements.
- Pupils are confident enough to take risks in their learning and challenge themselves because the school has clearly established an acceptance that learning happens when you make mistakes. This well-developed attitude to learning ensures that pupils are constantly challenging themselves and so make better progress.
- Staff encourage pupils to be self-assured and to take on a wide range of responsibilities. Pupils help prepare the hall for worship, clear the hall after lunch and become buddies for Reception children to help them settle into school quickly and grow in independence. These opportunities help to create a sense of care and consideration as pupils learn to look after each other and their school.
- After-school clubs like musical theatre and conservation clubs, along with sporting opportunities, further develop pupils' self-confidence, resilience and ability to cooperate and work within a team.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Attendance is good and pupils want to come to school. The headteacher has worked hard to ensure that barriers to attendance have been removed and that persistent absence is not an issue.
- Pupils say they are safe in school and that their school teaches them how to be safe and stay safe. They are fully aware of the different kinds of bullying but told the inspector it is rare in their school. Pupils say that staff 'sort things out very quickly' and that they value the high level of care provided by all members of staff.
- School behaviour record keeping is meticulous. Records show very few serious behavioural incidents and indicate that, when action is needed, the headteacher and staff act very supportively and in full consultation with parents. There have been no exclusions.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Many achieve the highest levels in reading and writing. In 2015, a high proportion made the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in mathematics is below average. Most-able pupils do not reach the standards they could. The school has identified the reasons for this. Good use is being made of additional skilled support to accelerate progress for the most able. This is helping them to be well prepared for the move to the next phase of their education.
- Phonics is taught consistently well and pupils confidently use their letter-sound awareness to read and spell unfamiliar words. The achievement of pupils at the end of Year 1 in the national screening check for reading is consistently higher than national results and improving each year.
- Consistently good teaching, learning and assessment are ensuring that progress is good, attainment is above average and both are improving. Pupils make good progress from their various starting points to achieve well, and growing numbers are reaching the highest levels in every year group.
- Pupils make rapid progress from their starting points and continue to achieve strongly in Years 1 and 2. Standards by the end of Key Stage 1 are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Standards for pupils currently in the school across a range of subjects and year groups are good. The work seen in mathematics books from Years 5 and 6 confirms that the progress presently being made in this subject is good. Most pupils have developed good calculation skills which they confidently apply. The tasks set for the most able in other year groups are not always challenging enough and do not consistently deepen thinking or ensure that pupils can apply what they already understand to solve problems.

- The school's use of pupil premium funding to employ additional, skilled support has ensured that disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and their rates of progress are in line with their peers in the majority of year groups. The progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved and the gap in attainment between them and other pupils has closed or has significantly narrowed in all subjects.
- Progress for those pupils who need to catch up is strong. Support has now been established to ensure that learning is personalised and directly targeted to focus on the gaps and barriers to learning.
- School information from detailed tracking of current pupils in reading, writing and mathematics shows that the majority of pupils are achieving well. Regular, meticulous focus on progress has ensured that the school is able to identify quickly pupils making slower progress and put support in place to ensure that all pupils make the progress they are capable of.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is strong. The spacious, imaginatively resourced learning environment inside and outdoors ensures that children make good progress in all areas of development. Early years staff carefully plan opportunities for children to learn and develop their social skills and independence.
- Leaders make good use of support and advice from a local authority adviser to confirm the accuracy of their judgements about children and their abilities as they start school. Checks made about what children know, understand and can do are regularly carried out. However, teachers do not always use the information they gather to plan activities that precisely develop children's learning. As a result, some children do not make the most progress they are capable of.
- Children start school in the Reception Year with a range of skills, knowledge and understanding. However, teachers' checks for children who started in September 2015 confirm that the majority of the class started school with personal and social skills below those typically found at this age. Staff know that children do not yet have the skills to concentrate for sustained periods, and plan activities to support development in this area.
- Early years staff have established good relationships with their local childcare settings. They share information to ensure that children make a successful transition to school and settle very quickly.
- Teachers nurture the personal development and well-being of children in early years well. Routines are established early and ensure that children develop and grow in confidence and independence. They are encouraged to play safely, follow rules and remember always to be kind and thoughtful. The children observed by the inspector playing outside played happily together, sustained role play, cooperated and shared activities.
- At the end of the Reception Year, children made considerable gains in their learning, particularly in the personal, social and emotional aspects of their development, and were in a position to make a successful transition to Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	109272
Local authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	10001791

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Sherman
Headteacher	Lorraine Wright
Telephone number	01275 372066
Website	www.stmarysprimaryportbury.co.uk
Email address	stmarys.pri@n-somerset.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 October 2013

Information about this school

- St Mary's is smaller than the average primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is well below the national average. This is additional government funding for looked after children and pupils known to be eligible to receive free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is slightly lower than the national average.
- The mobility of pupils in the school is lower than the national average.
- Early years provision is organised into one full-time Reception class of 15 children.
- The school has worked in close partnership with the local authority's link adviser.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in nine lessons, most of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, groups of pupils receiving support for learning were observed.
- The quality of work in pupils' books and learning journeys was scrutinised and the inspector listened to pupils read.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a group of other governors. A telephone conversation was conducted with the local authority's link adviser, who is also the practising co-headteacher at Flax Bourton Church of England Primary School.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents through discussions at the beginning and end of the day and through 32 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire).
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised by the inspector. including the school's information on pupils' attainment and progress in all year groups, self-evaluation records, safeguarding policies, curriculum policies, the school's provision for special educational needs, early years documentation, minutes of meetings of the governing body, external moderation reports and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- The inspector spoke informally with pupils around the school and during breaktimes. Behaviour was observed in the hall and in the playground during lunchtime. The inspector met with and obtained the views of pupil representatives from each year group.
- The inspector considered the responses to a questionnaire from 10 staff.

Inspection team

Lyn McNamara, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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