

# St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Yew Tree Road, Slough, Berkshire SL1 2AR

**Inspection dates** 27–28 January 2016

**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

- School leaders and governors have brought about significant improvements to the school since the previous inspection. Teaching is now good and pupils across the school achieve well.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics and reach standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 6. They make outstanding progress in writing.
- Teachers are well supported and receive clear guidance from school leaders to improve their skills. Previously weak performance has been eradicated.
- The quality of work in pupils' books is good. Work is neatly presented and reflects the pride that pupils take in their work.
- Pupils are happy and they enjoy school. They behave well and they feel safe owing to the high level of care provided by staff.
- Pupils from all backgrounds get on well together. They respect each other and enjoy finding out about the faiths and beliefs of those from different cultures.
- The curriculum is carefully planned to take into account pupils' needs and interests. The good links between writing and other subjects provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to practise their skills.
- Subject leaders, particularly those for English and mathematics, are knowledgeable and ambitious. They have benefited from training that has helped them to drive through necessary improvements to the way their subject is taught.
- The governing body has responded positively to an external review of their work. They now provide effective challenge to school leaders and hold them fully to account

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils are not all provided with a high enough level of challenge and so do not progress as much as they should.
- Not all teachers reinforce younger pupils' phonics (letters and sounds) skills in all lessons.
- There is no plan to show how the school is to develop over the longer term. The short-term plan has too many targets that lack focus.

## Full report

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

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding by:
  - ensuring that all teachers provide a high enough level of challenge to all pupils
  - taking every opportunity to reinforce and practise younger pupils' knowledge of phonics in all lessons.
- Improve leadership and management by
  - creating a plan to show how the school is to develop in the longer term
  - refining the targets in the short-term development plan so that they are more sharply focused on what most needs to be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders at all levels are ambitious and have worked tirelessly over the past two years to improve the school. They have high expectations for staff and pupils and share a drive and determination to improve further. Leaders have created a strong team who support each other and who are working towards the same aims. This is reflected in the comment from one member of staff who wrote that 'the whole school staff is dedicated to ensure that the pupils' well-being and achievement is at the forefront of all that we do'.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's performance and have created a development plan showing where further improvements are to be made. However, some actions to bring about these improvements are too lengthy and lack focus. Consequently, it is difficult for governors and leaders to check the impact of all actions.
- Subject leaders have been instrumental in securing improvements. They have provided training to staff and they check the work of other teachers to ensure that agreed policies and systems are followed by all staff. Teachers new to the profession are supported very well as they develop their skills. They speak highly of the help they get from their mentors and the value of training and coaching that they receive.
- School leaders frequently check the work of other teachers. They visit classrooms formally as well as informally and provide high-quality feedback to teachers. Leaders have put into place a programme of support and coaching to improve teachers' skills, establishing a culture of continuous improvement. This has brought about rapid improvements to the quality of teaching.
- Comprehensive systems to record and track pupils' progress mean that teachers and leaders can check that pupils are on track to meet their targets. It also allows staff to provide early support to those pupils at risk of falling behind. Information is thoroughly analysed to ensure that no groups of pupils are doing any less well than others. This reflects the school's promotion of equal opportunities.
- Senior leaders ensure that the pupil premium is spent wisely. Eligible pupils gain enriching experiences through visits and clubs. The extra help that these pupils receive in classrooms is helping to close the attainment gap with other pupils.
- The school offers a broad range of subjects that are engaging and stimulating for pupils. Many subjects are woven together under an overall theme, such as 'Baboon on the Moon'. This means that pupils can apply writing and mathematics skills when learning other subjects such as science and geography. The curriculum is supported by a wide variety of visits, including a residential visit for pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- The school prides itself on the wide range of activities that help to promote healthy lifestyles. The additional sports funding has been used effectively to provide specialist coaching for pupils in sports such as tennis, rugby and hockey. Part of the funding has also been used to improve teachers' skills in teaching aspects of sports, including gymnastics and dance. This has led to pupils' enjoyment of sports as well as improving their health and fitness.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully. Assemblies provide thought-provoking experiences, as well as offering periods for reflection. Pupils focus on school values, such as honesty, respect and forgiveness. They learn about different religions and beliefs and about fundamental British values. For example, pupils learn about democracy by electing members of the school council. Consequently, they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school works in close partnership with external agencies to support the school's work with those families whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. The school has responded positively to support from external advisers. However, the local authority has reduced in recent years and lacks capacity to deliver school improvement. Parents who spoke to inspectors and who responded to the online survey agreed that the school is well led and managed and that the school responds to any concerns that parents raise.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body has taken decisive action since the previous inspection to improve the way in which it works. Governors have reorganised their committee structure and link governors with particular expertise to aspects of the school's work. They visit school regularly so they check for themselves how well the school performs. They have a good understanding of performance information and they know that teaching is improving. They check that all arrangements to manage teachers' performance are in place and ensure that only the best teaching is rewarded. Governors hold school leaders to account for the school's performance by providing a high level of challenge to

leaders.

- Governors are fully involved in development planning but they have not yet established a long-term plan for the school. This means that they do not have a strategic overview of how the school is to develop. This prevents them from allocating resources to actions and projects that will take place over the longer term. Governors ensure that all financial resources, including additional funding, are managed well.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Arrangements to keep pupils safe are robust. All staff have had recent up-to-date training and are vigilant about signs that pupils might come to harm. All adults who visit school are carefully checked and made fully aware of the procedures to be followed should a concern arise regarding the safety of a pupil.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** is good

- Owing to support and guidance from school leaders, teaching has improved and is now good. Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan work that is at the right level for pupils and so all pupils make good progress.
- One particular strength of teaching is the way in which teachers check pupils' understanding and adjust their lesson accordingly. The quality of teachers' questioning is good. Most have good subject knowledge so they ask pupils questions that develop their understanding and deepen their thinking. They are particularly skilled in probing pupils to ensure that they understand their learning before moving them on to harder work.
- Teachers provide high-quality comments to pupils when marking their work. Their comments are sharply focused on what pupils need to do to improve their work. Teachers ensure that pupils respond to comments by correcting and improving their work. As a result, pupils make at least good progress.
- Most teachers have high expectations and they insist on high standards of work. Pupils present their work neatly, clearly and with a real sense of pride. Work in their books shows that they complete substantial amounts of work in both English and mathematics.
- In most classes, teachers explain clearly to pupils what it is they are expected to do. Teaching assistants provide valuable support both to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as to those pupils who get stuck. Consequently, little time is wasted.
- There are some good examples of where teachers demonstrate clearly what they want pupils to learn. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, the teacher showed pupils how to construct their writing linked to the class text, 'The Owl who was Afraid of the Dark'. She reminded them to use correct grammar and punctuation. However, some teachers miss opportunities to reinforce younger pupils' knowledge of phonics in English and other lessons and this slows their progress.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to work. They enjoy responding to teachers' questions and often offer their own comments. This reflects the good quality of relationships that exist between adults and pupils in school.
- Although most teachers provide a good level of challenge to pupils, there are times when they fail to provide extension and challenging activities for those pupils who complete their work. Occasionally, these pupils are directed to practising what they already know and this prevents them from achieving even more highly.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** is good

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff know pupils well and they take immediate action should any pupil express concerns. Pupils say that adults always listen to them and take their anxieties seriously.
- Pupils are happy and they enjoy school. They appreciate the wide variety of activities available to them, particularly the residential visit where they have the opportunity to try pursuits not usually available to them. They enjoy taking part in a wide variety of physical games that keep them fit and healthy.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They know about different forms of bullying and are adamant that it rarely occurs. They are confident that adults address minor issues that occasionally arise. Pupils

understand how to keep themselves safe from harm, including when using modern technology.

- Pupils are confident and enjoy talking to visitors about their school. They enjoy the range of opportunities they have to take on responsibilities in school. For example, some pupils are class ambassadors who greet visitors. Others have been elected to the school council and the Eco-Council. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the difference these roles made to the school. They believe they have a voice in school and that adults will listen to them and act on their ideas.
- The breakfast club is very well organised and provides pupils with a nutritious start to the school day. Adults provide a good variety of games and activities that encourage pupils to cooperate, share and play well together.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is because all staff, including those new to the school, implement the school's behaviour policy consistently so that all pupils know how they are expected to behave. Pupils have positive attitudes to school and they want to do well. Consequently, they behave well in class and when moving around the school.
- Pupils learn and play well together. They enjoy being part of a school where many pupils come from a wide variety of nationalities and are proud of the fact that they all get on well together. They say there are very few incidents related to name-calling and that discrimination on any grounds is not tolerated. They believe that all pupils are treated equally and that all have the same chances to be involved in school.
- Lunchtimes are happy and sociable occasions. They eat sensibly while chatting to friends and lunchtime supervisors encourage good manners. The playground is well supervised and there are plenty of activities for pupils to enjoy. Pupils are thoughtful and will go out of their way to help each other. They are polite and courteous to each other and to adults.
- Pupils' attendance is improving and is broadly average. The family support worker is supporting those families whose children do not attend regularly by stressing the importance of attending school. Through newsletters and assemblies, school leaders encourage and reward pupils' good attendance.
- The large majority of parents who responded to the online survey and who spoke to inspectors agreed that their children are happy and safe and that they behave well in school. Governors and staff also agree that pupils behave well in school.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**are good**

- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. This is because they make good progress in reading and mathematics to reach standards that are at least average. Their attainment in writing is significantly above average. The school's own performance information and work in pupils' books show that pupils make exceptional progress in writing. This is largely because they write extensively in most subjects so practise their skills daily. A further reason is that teaching of writing is precise and targeted to pupils' specific needs.
- All groups of pupils, including those who are most-able, achieve well from their relative starting points. Many have little or no English when they start school and a number of these pupils join the school partway through the year. They receive good support to learn English and, consequently, they soon catch up with their classmates.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in line with their classmates. Teachers pinpoint their particular difficulties and provide effective support to help them. Trained teaching assistants help them in class or provide these pupils with special programmes of work in both English and mathematics, to overcome more complex problems.
- After several years in which the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others has been widening, the school re-organised the way in which the additional funding was allocated. They now rigorously check the progress of disadvantaged pupils and provide immediate help to those at risk of falling behind. School information and work in pupils' books show that these pupils now attain as well as their classmates in all subjects. Eligible pupils take part in all school activities such as visits and clubs and, where necessary, they receive additional support in class. Consequently, the gaps between disadvantaged and other pupils are rapidly closing.
- School leaders were disappointed in the outcomes of the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2015 in which pupils' scores were below average. Leaders reviewed the way in which phonics is taught and introduced a

structured programme targeted towards small groups of pupils. In the lower part of the school, pupils have daily short teaching sessions of phonics and this is already bringing about tangible improvements. However, sometimes teachers miss opportunities to reinforce and practise phonics skills in other lessons.

- Pupils have developed a love of reading and are very proud of their school library. Pupils in Year 2 enjoy reading and are becoming increasingly confident using phonics to read unknown words. Some have made good progress and are already reading longer books such as 'The Shoemakers Boy'. However, a very few pupils have reading books that are too easy for them and so they do not make the rapid progress that they should.
- Pupils in Year 6 are enthusiastic readers and could talk about their favourite books, their favourite authors and the variety of books they read. They read clearly and fluently and with confidence. They answer questions about their books by referring to the text. They have developed higher order reading skills, such as predicting what might happen next and giving reasons why characters acted as they did. It was a pleasure to talk with them about their reading.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics. This is because teachers are enthusiastic and break learning down into small steps so that pupils understand what they are to learn. Often pupils are given complex problems to solve in which they have to apply their mathematical skills. For example, pupils in Year 6 compared different ways of travelling from Britain to South America by calculating the costs involved, including carbon emissions.

## Early years provision

is good

- Children are warmly welcomed into a bright and stimulating environment in both Nursery and Reception classes. They feel valued and well cared for and so they settle quickly into the routines established by staff. They become confident and self-assured and are keen to show visitors what they have been doing. Children get on very well together and they behave well.
- Children join the Nursery and Reception classes with skills that are below those expected for their age, particularly in all aspects of literacy and language. They make good progress so that by the end of the Reception year, most have reached a good level of development across all areas of learning. They are very well prepared for Year 1.
- There is a good balance of activities that are led by adults and those that children choose for themselves. Adults ask open and challenging questions that make children think to develop their language skills. Consequently, those children who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress in learning English.
- Although systems to record children's achievements are thorough, the way in which children's work is presented is in need of refreshment. Children's 'learning journeys' are untidy and do not give an accurate picture of what children can do. School leaders are aware of this and are taking action to bring this aspect of the early years in line with the high standards of presentation seen in the rest of the school.
- The local authority and other local schools verify the accuracy of teachers' assessments. Adults carefully observe children and use this information to plan the next steps in learning. While most activities are challenging, there are times when children can do a lot more than some teachers demand of them.
- The learning and progress of disadvantaged children is carefully checked to ensure that the additional funding is helping them to learn and develop at similar rates to other children. Adults help them with their language development, so that these pupils can take part in the full range of activities offered in the early years.
- The new early years co-leader has a good understanding of what is working well and what needs to be changed. They have an action plan for improvement. They know that children do well in the early years but nevertheless are ambitious for further improvement. The co-leader works in close partnership with the early years team and with other school leaders.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109995
<b>Local authority</b>	Slough
<b>Inspection number</b>	10002323

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	589
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paula Hammond
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rachel Cross
<b>Telephone number</b>	01753 534791
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmarys.slough.sch.uk">www.stmarys.slough.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:post@stmarys.slough.sch.uk">post@stmarys.slough.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 October 2013

## Information about this school

- The school is much larger than most primary schools. Currently there are three classes in Years 1, 2, and 6 and there are two classes in Years 3, 4 and 5.
- Most pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and about three quarters speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average. This is additional funding provided by the government to support those pupils, who in this school, are entitled to free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- There is provision for children in the early years in the Nursery and three Reception classes. Children attend Nursery part-time and become full-time when they enter Reception.
- The school provides a breakfast club for pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- There have been significant changes to the teaching team and the governing body since the previous inspection.
- Governors and school leaders are overseeing a major building project to provide additional accommodation as the school expands to take an additional class in Years 3, 4 and 5.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils working in 30 lessons or parts of lessons, ten of which were observed jointly with school leaders. They looked at work in pupils' books and they listened to pupils reading in Year 2 and Year 6. They observed pupils as they moved around the school and in the playground and spoke informally to pupils. They attended two assemblies.
- Inspectors held meetings with school leaders, teachers and two groups of pupils. They met with the chair and two other governors. A short discussion took place between the lead inspector and an external adviser who has been working with the school.
- Among the documents scrutinised were school development plans, records relating to pupils' behaviour and safety and minutes from governors' meetings. Inspectors also looked at information showing pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The views of parents were taken into account by analysing the 64 responses to the online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also spoke to parents informally during the inspection. The views of staff were taken into account by considering the 27 responses to the staff survey.

## Inspection team

Joy Considine, lead inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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