

# St Mary's CofE (A) First School

The Heath, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire ST14 7LX

<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 June 2016
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
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 single-minded determination of the headteacher, other school leaders and the governing body has rapidly improved the quality of teaching and raised pupils' achievement. Consequently, both are now good.
- Pupils achieve well from their starting points. More pupils are attaining outcomes above what is expected for their age by the end of Year 4. They are well prepared for learning in Year 5.
- Most teachers provide interesting and motivating lessons. Pupils learn well as a result.
- The early years provision is good. There has been a sustained improvement in children's outcomes. They are now well prepared for the challenges in Year 1.
- Pupils' personal development and behaviour are outstanding. They are excellent ambassadors for the values the school holds.
- Pupils are friendly, kind, respectful and thoughtful to each other and adults. Their attitudes to learning are consistently positive.
- The school is a happy, caring, inclusive place to learn. Pupils are extremely well cared for, feel very safe and thrive.
- Governance has improved significantly. Governors are knowledgeable about their role and provide effective challenge and support to school leaders.
- The school has a strong partnership with its parents and carers. The overwhelming majority are positive about all aspects of the school's work.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The school's new marking system is not fully implemented. Pupils are sometimes not clear about how they can improve their work.
- The less able pupils sometimes do not make the progress they are capable of. At times, the resources used to support their learning are not adjusted well enough to meet their needs, particularly in writing.
- In writing, occasionally pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop an understanding of what they will be writing about.
- The range of activities offered in the early years provision is not as interesting and stimulating outdoors as it is indoors. Sometimes children do not know what it is they are expected to learn in their outdoor independent play activities.

## Full report

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

- Further improve the quality of provision in the early years by:
  - providing a wider range of creative, stimulating activities outdoors
  - ensuring that children know what they are to learn in their independent outdoor activities.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to outstanding by:
  - ensuring that less-able pupils are well supported by a range of suitably adjusted resources, particularly when writing, so that they make the best possible progress
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of what they will be writing about
  - ensuring that the school's new marking system is fully implemented so that pupils are clear how they can improve their work
  - sharing the strong teaching practice evident more widely within the school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher provides very visible, strong and determined leadership. This has invigorated staff and governors to take rapid action to tackle the areas requiring improvement at the last inspection and to drive the school forward. Consequently, all areas of the school have improved since the last inspection.
- Leaders have been successful in their endeavours without losing sight of their core values of care, respect and inclusion for all. Pupils live out the school motto 'Learning to love, loving to learn.'
- Staff now have much higher expectations, both of their own teaching and of what pupils can achieve. Leaders have tightened the arrangements for managing the performance of staff. Staff are now held to account for the progress of their pupils. Targets for all staff are linked clearly to actions in the school development plan, and are regularly reviewed. Staff are working well as a team and morale is high.
- Senior leaders and governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and the key priorities for further development, which inform the well-structured school development plan.
- Senior and middle leaders have improved the way they check the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and progress. A systematic approach to evaluate the quality of teaching is in place. External support is used to confirm the school's own judgements. Leaders have eradicated weaker teaching and ensured that teaching is now good. They know that teaching needs to be outstanding so that all pupils can achieve their very best. There is scope to ensure that the very best teaching practice evident is more widely shared with other staff.
- Leadership is now more widely distributed than at the last inspection. Well-targeted training is appreciated by staff. A wide range of professional development, including courses run through the National Leadership College, has helped raise the knowledge and understanding of middle and senior leaders. An example of this is the way in which professional development has helped those leading physical education and sport to improve significantly the profile of this subject within the curriculum.
- The primary school physical education and sport funding is used effectively to reinforce the skills of teachers and pupils and, therefore, improve outcomes for pupils. Funding includes the provision of specialist sports coaches and a wide range of clubs. The school now participates in competitions with other schools. Pupils spoke animatedly about the recent swimming gala and gymnastics competition and how they have many more opportunities to attend sports clubs. Increased participation means that a growing number of pupils are developing their physical fitness.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively to ensure that pupils supported by this additional government funding make progress that is at least in line with other pupils nationally and within the school.
- At the last inspection, the school was asked to extend its range of partnerships to help develop pupils' learning. There are now strong partnerships in place and the school is actively supporting other schools. For example, the school recently shared its 'assessment without levels' plan with other schools in the Uttoxeter area.
- Staff make the wide curriculum creative and enticing so that pupils are keen to take an active part in lessons. This has had a significant impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. Teachers often use a chosen book to plan themes and topics, which are effectively used to link learning across subjects. All pupils in Years 3 and 4 learn to play the violin or viola. They benefit from a range of trips and visits which help extend their learning. During the inspection, Year 3 pupils took part in a walk around Uttoxeter, where they visited five places of Christian worship. Pupils spoke about how this had helped them better understand the Christian faith. The weekly 'enrichment afternoon' extends the formal curriculum successfully. This includes a wide range of opportunities, such as to learn to cook, garden and weave and to have yoga and fencing lessons.
- The culture of care, nurture and inclusion contributes powerfully to pupils' strong personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This awareness is enhanced by the personal, social, health and economic curriculum, assemblies, circle time and links with the local church. Pupils engaged in an animated discussion following an assembly where they watched a clip of an Olympic athlete persevere to the finish line. Pupils were able to compare this to situations in their own lives. Qualities, such as trust, respect and valuing people other than themselves, contribute to pupils' good understanding of life as citizens beyond school and the values inherent in Britain today.
- Partnerships with parents are strong. Leaders go to great lengths to protect pupils and keep them safe. Effective support is provided for vulnerable pupils, those with additional needs and their families. Good

links with a range of agencies help secure the help and support pupils need. Parents are very positive about the school's work. Parents particularly value the increased opportunities to be involved in their child's education. During the inspection, Year 4 parents were in school working on a writing project as part of their regular 'family learning' sessions. One parent summed up the views of many when saying, 'The school has been completely turned around since the arrival of the new headteacher. My children are well known and valued by the school. Teachers go above and beyond to help my child grow and develop.'

- The local authority has worked productively with the school since its previous inspection and supports it effectively.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The governing body responded decisively and speedily to address the issues found at the previous inspection. It has embraced the recommendations from the external review. By their own admission, the governors have 'come a long way'. They have made significant changes to their organisation and the way they operate. Governors now provide very effective support and challenge to the school and are much more involved in monitoring its work.
  - Governors now evaluate accurately the strengths of the school and the areas where it can improve. They have a clear understanding of the assessment information that is available to the school and use it to check how well all groups of pupils are achieving. They carry out a wide range of monitoring visits, each with a clear focus linked to the school improvement plan priorities. Link governors meet regularly with subject leaders in order to monitor specific aspects of the school's work and report back in detail to the full governing body.
  - Governors expect to see evidence of targets being met to agree with any recommendations for pay rises or promotion to sustain the improved picture of teaching and learning. Governors effectively manage the school's finances and resources and measure the impact of spending, including the pupil premium and sports funding, on pupils' outcomes.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding is regarded as a high priority within the school. All staff receive regular training and know how to identify if pupils are potentially at risk. Policies are regularly updated and paperwork is detailed and robust. Effective relationships with other agencies ensure that pupils are kept safe and their welfare needs well met.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is good and much improved since the last inspection when it was found to require improvement. Senior leaders have taken effective action to address any weak teaching. Consequently teaching is now much more consistent. The work in pupils' books and the school's own information confirms that teaching is now good over time.
- Teachers plan activities that engage pupils' interest. For example, in Year 2 in mathematics, pupils were asked to help plan the forthcoming visit to the 'Think Tank', a local museum. They calculated costs for the adults and children. They were able to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in a realistic context.
- The most able pupils are now almost consistently fully challenged. Additional challenges, particularly in mathematics, help them deepen their understanding and extend their learning.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are trusting and positive so that pupils are keen to respond to questions and 'have a go'. Pupils are keen to learn new things and to succeed. Pupils are given good opportunities to work in many different ways.
- Assessment information is used effectively to ensure that teachers understand how well pupils are achieving and use this information to plan learning that meet the varying needs of their pupils. Teachers meet with colleagues both in school and in other schools to ensure that their assessments are accurate and consistent. Teachers regularly evaluate the progress of the pupils in their class and discuss this with senior leaders.
- The school has recently introduced a new marking system. This is not yet fully implemented. Pupils are sometimes unclear how they can improve their work.
- Pupils fully understand the 'steps to success' they are given at the beginning of each lesson so that they know how they can achieve well.
- Teachers often provide pupils with helpful information to extend their learning. 'Working walls' in many classrooms help pupils by displaying key vocabulary and help them identify what it is they already know

and what they still need to find out.

- Resources are often well used to support learning. In a Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) session, a treasure hunt for hidden words enabled pupils to sort sounds into the right categories. Occasionally, the resources used to support the learning of less-able pupils are not adjusted well enough and are too difficult for them to understand, particularly when undertaking written work.
- The teaching of basic skills is good. There were many examples seen of challenging tasks being set in literacy, enabling pupils to explore different texts and writing styles and to develop their literacy skills across different subjects. In Year 4, for example, pupils were writing their own responses to the illustrations in the class book, 'The lost thing'. Pupils were well challenged to exchange their views, explore new vocabulary and rehearse their writing. Sometimes, pupils do not have enough opportunities to fully develop their understanding of what they will be writing about, particularly the less able. This can sometimes limit progress.
- Additional adults are used well to support learning throughout the school. Teaching assistants are skilled and their support is effective. They give helpful guidance and support in lessons, including small-group and one-to-one sessions.
- Adults ask good questions that require pupils to explain their learning. They are persistent in asking probing follow-on questions that require pupils to think carefully and deeply. This was seen in Year 3 in mathematics, where pupils had to explain why the calculations displayed were incorrect and what needed to be done to put them right.

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

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Values of trust, mutual respect and care are at the heart of the school's work and permeate everything the school does. A warm, welcoming and inclusive ethos has been created. Staff act as excellent role models and pupils know they are all valued. Pupils readily respond to the high expectations and moral values of the school. Pupils' attitudes are exemplary and they develop into thoughtful, caring and self-confident young people during their time at St Mary's.
- Personal development is an integral part of the school's work. Through the curriculum, trips to places of interest, listening to visitors, assemblies, leading worship in the local church, charity work and being active within the community, pupils learn to be very respectful, tolerant and thoughtful.
- Pupils say they are very safe in school and feel very well looked after. All parents endorse this view. Pupils are taught extremely well how to keep safe in school, online and in the community. Regular visitors to school, such as the police and the NSPCC, supplement the range of work in the curriculum to deepen pupils' understanding of potential risks and how to respond to them.
- Pupils respond eagerly to the many opportunities to take on responsibilities. These range from eco-councillors, who recycle paper and turn off lights, to reading buddies, who listen to younger pupils read. The school and sports councils help pupils gain a good understanding of democracy. Members help school leaders to decide what playground equipment to buy or which sports clubs to run. Pupils talk proudly about the recent charity fair at which pupils ran stalls to raise money for autistic children.
- Pupils are extremely proud of their school. They understand that adults want them to work hard and learn new things so that 'we will do well at the middle school and then at high school'. The high expectations of the adults have resulted in pupils having higher expectations for themselves.
- Pupils are well supported to keep healthy and have an age-appropriate understanding of the importance of making healthy choices. They feel that the wider opportunities they now have in physical education and sports clubs contribute to this.
- Pupils say that very occasionally there is a 'little bit of bullying'. They say that this is quickly dealt with and school records confirm this. Almost all parents agree.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Adults have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and are excellent role models. Pupils respond positively and are an extremely well-behaved school community. Behaviour is exemplary as pupils move around the school, in the dining hall and at break and lunchtimes. Pupils queue in an orderly manner to buy their morning tuck and are sociable and kind to one another.

- Pupils, staff and parents agree that behaviour is very positive in school. School records confirm that behaviour has improved since the last inspection. The new reward system, which enables pupils to earn silver and gold tokens to exchange for stationery items, is fully understood by, and very motivating to, pupils. In lessons, most pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning. Pupils cooperate well with one another and respond quickly when an adult gives an instruction or makes a request.
- Pupils enjoy school and the above-average attendance seen at the last inspection has been sustained.

## Outcomes for pupils

## are good

- In all key stages, pupils make good progress from their starting points. Outcomes are improving over time. More pupils are on track to achieve and exceed the expectations for their age. This is because of changes to the curriculum and the improving quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- There has been an improved trend over time in national assessments in Year 2 since 2013. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected level has risen and was above the national average for reading, writing and mathematics in 2015. An above-average proportion of pupils attained above the expected level in reading and mathematics.
- Current progress is good. Work in pupils' books and school information show that all groups are making good progress from their different starting points. More pupils are on track to exceed age-related expectations this year. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Progress in reading is a strength of the school. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been broadly at the national average for the last two years. Almost all achieve the required level by the end of Year 2. This represents good progress from their starting points on entry.
- Younger pupils apply their phonics skills effectively to help them read unfamiliar words and complete their writing. They are confident and keen to read increasingly difficult words. Pupils say that having regular practice with the school's volunteer 'reading army' has helped them enjoy reading more. Year 4 pupils talk knowledgeably about a range of authors and say that the visits of many authors this year to school have promoted their love of reading.
- Pupils show more confidence and skill in their writing than reported at the last inspection. The proportion of pupils writing at levels that are above the age-related expectations in Year 2 has improved this year. These pupils were seen competently writing a 'What am I?' riddle. Most were confidently using correct punctuation and spelling. Most-able pupils included a wide range of grammatical features, such as alliteration and similes, in their writing. Challenge for the most able pupils has improved since the last inspection. However for some less-able pupils in Years 3 and 4, progress is not as rapid in writing as it is in reading and mathematics.
- Achievement in mathematics has also improved and pupils now achieve well. Pupils have good opportunities to use their mathematical skills in other subjects. Regular opportunities are given for pupils to use and apply their skills in problem-solving challenges. Pupils were observed confidently giving reasons and explanations for their answers.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good, and at times outstanding, progress. In the 2015 national assessments in Year 2, the previous gaps in attainment with other pupils in the school and pupils nationally closed in reading and writing. It narrowed considerably in mathematics. This is due to the close-targeted support they receive. The majority of disadvantaged pupils are currently making similar progress to other pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability receive close support from adults to ensure that all are secure in their learning and achieve well.

## Early years provision

## is good

- Children get off to a good start in the Reception class. Most children enter with skills that are below those typical for their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has increased over the last three years. In 2015 it was just above the national average and is on track to increase further this year. Children are well prepared to start Year 1.
- The good leadership of the headteacher and the early years leader has led to improved provision for

children. Teaching, learning and assessment are good.

- Children are engaged well in their learning. Well-prepared structured tasks and activities children can choose for themselves enable them to practise skills developed already and try out new experiences. Opportunities to develop early reading, writing and mathematical skills are well threaded through the provision.
- The classroom is a lively, stimulating place. Children were observed using the role play 'Bug lab' to observe insects and measure them. During a 'Stay and Play' session, children worked with their parents to make boats for a frog in response to a letter asking for their help. Children developed their problem-solving skills well and were eager to give reasons for their chosen design. The school is aware that currently the outdoor provision is not as stimulating as that indoors. It does not provide as many opportunities for children to be creative. Sometimes, there is not a clear focus for children during independent outdoor activities. In these instances, children do not know what they are to learn or do.
- Staff build quickly on children's previous knowledge and learning, which enables them to learn quickly. Staff are skilled at questioning to move on children's learning. Children were observed working with an adult on writing addition number sentences. The adult skilfully adapted the task for the most able children to include four numbers instead of two.
- Children have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. They know routines well and listen carefully to adults.
- The school works hard to engage parents in their child's learning. Good transition arrangements ensure that children and parents are well supported for their entry into school. During the inspection, new Reception children and their parents were visiting for a session. One parent said: 'I feel that the school already knows my child. The Stay and Play sessions are helping my child to settle and he is eager to come in September.'
- Adults ensure that children are safe and well cared for. Children are confident in approaching any adult if they are upset and have a concern. Leaders carry out daily risk assessments to ensure that the environment is safe for children. Children's welfare is given the highest priority. As a result, children are happy, confident and enjoy school.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	124344
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10012409

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

<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	161
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lucy Toyn
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Wade
<b>Telephone number</b>	01889 256450
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-marys-uttoxeter.staffs.sch.uk">www.st-marys-uttoxeter.staffs.sch.uk</a>
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14–15 May 2014

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-size primary school.
- The school serves pupils from mostly White British backgrounds, with a below-average proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than the national average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average.
- A new headteacher joined the school in September 2014. The deputy headteacher left in July 2015. Two assistant headteacher posts were created in September 2015. One of these is on a job-share basis.
- The school received a monitoring inspection in November 2014. The outcome of this visit, carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, was that leaders and governors were taking effective action to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the previous full inspection.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons across all year groups. Four of these were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, either in lessons or as a separate activity.
- Meetings took place with staff, pupils, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 18 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 10 written comments. Parents were also spoken to at the start of the school day. The school's own last parental questionnaire was also scrutinised.
- Inspectors attended an assembly and carried out a joint learning walk with the headteacher. They heard pupils read and observed break and lunchtime. Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents including: the school's own check on its performance; the school's information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Mary Hughes, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mary Maybank	Ofsted Inspector

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