

St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School

Magdalen Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN37 6EU

Inspection dates

18–19 October 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, leaders have not improved the overall effectiveness of the school.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Planned learning does not always take account of what pupils already know and can do. In some lessons where pupils are unclear or confused, teachers do not recognise and respond to this.
- Outcomes across the school require improvement. The progress of pupils is inconsistent because teaching is not always effective. The most able pupils in key stage 1 do not achieve well enough.
- Leaders do not use all of the information they have about the school effectively. Leaders have not looked closely enough at the behaviour and attendance of pupils over time.
- Pupils do not always behave well in lessons when teaching is not effective. Pupils become less focused on their work when it is too easy or too difficult.
- New senior and middle leaders have identified what needs to be done to improve the school. However, they have not had the time to have a positive impact on teaching and pupils' outcomes in key stages 1 and 2.
- Governors do not have a clear view of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. Governors rely too heavily on what leaders tell them about behaviour.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a strong sense of the world around them.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well in reading at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2. The teaching of phonics is good and almost all pupils reach the expected standard in Year 1.
- Leaders have improved teaching and learning in the early years. Outcomes for the youngest children in the school are good.
- Leaders have an accurate view of teaching and outcomes in the school. Leaders have clear and precise plans for improvement based on which pupils require greater challenge and which pupils need to catch up.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should improve the quality of teaching and secure at least good outcomes, by:
 - ensuring that planned learning consistently takes account of pupils' different starting points, including the most able and those pupils who need to catch up
 - ensuring that teachers recognise during lessons when the work is too easy or too difficult and adapt the learning accordingly
 - increasing the proportion of key stage 1 pupils working at greater depth in writing and mathematics
 - increasing the proportion of pupils in key stage 2 working at age-related expectations in mathematics.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership, by:
 - rigorously tracking and analysing the behaviour of pupils, so that leaders, including governors, can ask questions about what is working and what is not
 - looking regularly at the attendance levels of groups of pupils, including those who are persistently absent, to be sure that leaders' actions are effective
 - ensuring that middle leaders have a positive impact on teaching and pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not improved the quality of teaching across the whole school. Leaders know where the most and least effective teaching is and have provided some targeted support but it is not yet having an impact. Not all staff feel that they get effective feedback from leaders about what is going well and what could be improved.
- Leaders have not improved outcomes for pupils across the school. Inconsistent teaching over time has had an impact on the progress that pupils make. Consequently, the proportions of pupils working within age-related expectations in Year 5 and 6 are low. However, standards in phonics, outcomes in the early years and progress in reading are strengths in the school.
- Leaders do not know their school well enough. Leaders have not been rigorous in their analysis of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. Leaders do log individual incidents of behaviour but do not know if pupils' behaviour over time is improving or not.
- New middle leaders are not having a positive impact on teaching, learning and assessment because they have not been in post long enough. Leaders have worked quickly to establish what is not effective in the school. For example, leaders know that the information report regarding their policy for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not evaluative.
- Leaders do have an accurate view of the quality of teaching, the outcomes for pupils and therefore of their effectiveness. Plans to improve these aspects of the school are detailed and precise.
- Leaders' use of pupil premium is effective. Leaders have improved their planning for how the additional funding is spent since the last inspection. In some year groups, where the teaching is most effective, disadvantaged pupils make more progress than their peers and achieve well. However, leaders know that in some classes disadvantaged pupils and their peers make less progress because teaching is and has been inconsistent across the school.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders ensure that curriculum plans cover the appropriate range of subjects, knowledge and skills. Leaders use specialist teachers to deliver aspects of the curriculum and are currently evaluating the effectiveness of this. The school provides pupils with a wide range of trips and visits that extend and enhance learning, such as older pupils who visit France to deepen their understanding of the first world war.
- Additional sports premium funding is used effectively. Specialist coaches provide direct teaching and support school staff to enhance physical education in the school. Leaders have increased participation in competitive sports and offer a range of sporting clubs for older pupils.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain because the school places a clear emphasis on rights and respect. Pupils develop their class charters and undertake a wide range of roles and responsibilities across the school. Pupils have a strong sense of

their own faith but are also clear about their respect for others.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. Leaders have created strong links with schools around the world and this has provided pupils with rich opportunities to explore similarities and differences. Pupils develop heightened empathy for others through these links. For example, the plight of a pen-pal from Sierra Leone led older pupils to establish fundraising activities to purchase mosquito nets.

Governance of the school

- Governors have worked closely with senior leaders to evaluate the school's effectiveness. Governors have played an active role in gathering the evidence and analysing pupils' progress closely. Governors know that outcomes and teaching require improvement. However, governors have been too accepting of leaders' evaluation that behaviour is good. Governors did not know that leaders were not tracking pupils' behaviour and did not ask what difference less effective teaching was making to pupils' behaviour in class.
- Governors are beginning to hold leaders to account for the quality of education provided by the school. Minutes of meetings highlight that governors are asking questions with increasing frequency about the things that are most important, such as pupils' progress. However, governors readily accept leaders' responses and do not pursue reasonable lines of enquiry further.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have clear policies and procedures to keep children safe. Leaders ensure that all staff know and understand their responsibilities and this creates a culture in the school where safeguarding is given a high priority. Leaders keep clear and thorough records of all concerns and track their work with partner agencies. Governors diligently check leaders' processes through the year to ensure that they are satisfied that safeguarding is effective. Staff and parents feel that pupils are safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Some teachers do not take account of pupils' starting points when deciding what is to be taught. Consequently, in some classes work is too easy or too difficult. In these instances pupils will finish the task too quickly and become easily distracted or become frustrated and not participate.
- In some lessons, teachers recognise and respond quickly to pupils' misconceptions and move them on. For example, in a Year 3 science lesson some pupils identified the bone in their shin as the body part that made their lower leg move. Effective questioning and modelling enabled pupils to realise the error and move on quickly. In other lessons, teachers do not recognise when children are getting confused and this means that pupils' misunderstandings go unnoticed.
- The teaching of mathematics in key stage 2 requires improvement. Leaders recognise that some older pupils have clear misconceptions about the value of learning from mistakes and always being right, particularly in mathematics. Problem-solving and

reasoning skills are underdeveloped in many pupils because fluency and getting it right have been prioritised. The new mathematics leader has rightly focused attention on the lack of resilience in some older pupils to meet new challenges.

- Some teaching assistants are effective in supporting pupils' learning. They engage pupils, including those who need to catch up, in a range of appropriate tasks that are relevant to their starting points and pupils make good progress. Sometimes, other adults miss opportunities to extend pupils' learning, for example by not focusing on pupils' pen grip to support better handwriting while also developing their phonics knowledge.
- The teaching of phonics is good. Teachers, including those in the early years, have good subject knowledge and teach phonics in a systematic way. Younger pupils apply what they know in their writing and are confident to break words into groups of sounds and put them back together.
- Reading is taught well. Older pupils read with fluency. Pupils are exposed to a wide range of texts that are appropriately challenging and engaging. Pupils who need support to be reading at the expected standard are regularly given good opportunities to read with one adult. Pupils make good progress and achieve well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are warm and respectful. Older pupils show a good level of care and support for younger children, for example when they help them walk regularly down to church.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Pupils value the role that peer mediators play in sorting out minor disagreements quickly and successfully. Parents feel that pupils are happy at school.
- Pupils say, and records show, that incidents of bullying are rare. Older pupils are clear about different types of bullying. Pupils state and leaders' records indicate that racist incidents are very rare and that the younger children who use inappropriate language do not repeat it.
- Leaders have revised their approach to teaching pupils about being safe online, to make it more effective. Last year, specialist advisers came into school to work with older pupils and parents together to get key messages across. Leaders have identified in their self-evaluation of the school that they want to increase the frequency with which pupils hear important messages about being safe online.
- Attendance of pupils overall is good. Absence levels for all pupils and groups of pupils including disadvantaged pupils and boys decreased last year. However, leaders do not track the persistent absence of a very small group of pupils well enough. Leaders do identify which pupils are not in school but do not know if their work to improve attendance is having a positive impact or not.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour in classes is inconsistent. In lessons where learning is meeting the needs of pupils, behaviour is good. However, in too many classes pupils are easily distracted. Low-level disruption means that staff feel the need to constantly remind pupils about what is expected. Learning time is lost because pupils do not always respond to teachers' instructions.
- Leaders' analysis of pupils' behaviour requires improvement. Leaders do not have a clear system for reviewing the frequency of disruptive or unwanted behaviour. Leaders have not made the link clearly enough between less effective teaching and pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is good. Break and lunchtimes are calm and harmonious. Pupils are polite and courteous because the school develops pupils' personal and social skills well.
- All staff and most parents feel that pupils behave well in school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Progress and standards across the school are inconsistent because for a sustained period of time teaching has required improvement. For example, the school's performance information shows that more than three quarters of current Year 3 pupils are working at the expected level or beyond in mathematics. However, under half of current Year 6 pupils are working at or beyond the expected standard in the same subject.
- At the end of key stage 1 in July 2016, not enough pupils were working at greater depth, particularly in writing and mathematics. Leaders' analysis highlights that the most able pupils did not make enough progress from their starting points in the early years.
- In key stage 2, not enough pupils are working at age-related expectations, particularly in mathematics. Progress from starting points for all pupils, including the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils, is inconsistent.
- In lessons, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Assessment captures the significant achievements that relate to pupils' particular needs. For example, pupils engaging with a whole-class activity for a sustained period. However, leaders are not yet tracking the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in a way that they can evidence the impact of interventions and support.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have improved over time. At the end of key stage 2 in 2014 and 2015 differences were diminishing or had diminished between disadvantaged pupils in the school and other pupils nationally. In key stage 1, differences have also been diminishing over time. School's performance information is clear that inconsistent teaching is impacting on all pupils. In some year groups, disadvantaged pupils are making as much or more progress than their peers and in others they make less progress.

- In 2016, almost all Year 1 pupils reached the expected standard in phonics. The proportion reaching the expected standard in 2015 was also greater than that seen nationally. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress in phonics from their starting points.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was above national average and writing was broadly in line with national figures. Pupils who did not reach a good level of development made good progress in key stage 1 and caught up.
- Reading is a strength of the school. Pupils make good progress and achieve well. In 2016, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 were well above national average. Pupils make strong progress from key stage 1 to key stage 2.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching in the early years since the last inspection. Children make good progress from their starting points, including those who start school needing to develop their language and literacy skills. The proportion of pupils who achieve a good level of development is above the national average. Consequently, most children are ready to start Year 1.
- Disadvantaged children in the school get a good start because staff know all of the children's needs well. Accurate assessments of what children know and can do ensure that adults plan experiences to extend children's learning.
- Staff work as a team to create clear routines and expectations that children quickly understand and follow. Children's personal and social development is a strength of the early years and is seen in the way that children play with each other, work with adults and respond to adult direction. During this inspection, children were seen pretending to be the 'teacher', sitting in the big chair, turning the candle on to pray and offering an inspector a sticker for 'being good'.
- Leaders work well with other nurseries and partners to support the transition of children into the early years, including children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, children settle well into school and make good progress.
- Children are provided with a range of stimulating learning experiences both inside and outside. Adults promote opportunities to make marks and write and children who need help with their early writing skills make good progress. Children are proud of what they achieve and want to share their success with staff.
- Adults in the early years support children's learning well. However, when the whole class is working together some children's learning needs are not met as well as they could be because the role of other adults is not always clear.

School details

Unique reference number	114574
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10019871

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Linda Dignum
Headteacher	Jane Smith
Telephone number	01424 427801
Website	www.st-mary-star.e-sussex.sch.uk
Email address	office@st-mary-star.e-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 November 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school did meet the 2015 floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Almost all teaching staff are new to the school since the last inspection. Most senior and middle leaders are new. The headteacher was absent for a sustained period of time last year for medical reasons and returned full time in September 2016.
- St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average primary school. There are seven classes from Reception to Year 6.
- Under a fifth of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is below national average.

- Just over half of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups and a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning throughout the school, usually with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at pupils' work during lessons and work in their books from the previous year.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and middle leaders. Meetings were held with a local authority representative and with governors.
- Parents' views were considered through the 18 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and in conversations with parents at the beginning of the school day. The views of staff were considered through the 27 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and through meetings.
- Pupils' views were heard through meetings and by talking to pupils around the school.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness, improvement plans, records of local authority visits, and leaders' analysis of the quality of teaching, pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records and the central record of recruitment checks on staff.

Inspection team

Mark Cole, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Helen Tait

Ofsted Inspector

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