

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Chanters Road, Bideford, Devon EX39 2QN

Inspection dates

19–20 October 2016

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| 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 | Outstanding |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides clarity of vision and a drive for improvement which, with strong support from his able senior team and well-informed governors, sustains good leadership and management.
- Leaders have worked tirelessly and with increasing success to improve the school since the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders, including governors, implement effective strategies to check the performance of the school and to rectify areas in need of improvement.
- Governors hold staff leaders to account and contribute to the school's secure capacity to improve in the future.
- Leaders' determined actions to improve teaching and pupils' learning have guaranteed good practice and outcomes and sustained rapid improvement.
- Leaders ensure that additional funds to support disadvantaged pupils and to enrich pupils' sporting experiences are used well.
- Parents hold the school in high regard. They work supportively with staff and value the way staff develop confidence-boosting relationships with their children.
- Staff provide high levels of care and guidance to keep pupils safe. As a consequence, pupils say they feel safe.
- Teachers and skilled teaching assistants know the pupils' individual needs accurately. Effective teaching sustains pupils' good progress from their different starting points. As a result, standards are rising quickly across the school.
- Most teachers have improved the way they challenge pupils. They adapt their teaching to meet pupils' different learning needs. In some classes, these aspects are more variable. Tasks do not always stretch pupils and enthuse them fully in learning. As a result, the writing skills and the ability to solve problems in mathematics are sometimes not developed for a minority of pupils as quickly as others.
- Pupils enjoy school greatly and this is evident in their good attendance.
- Pupils behave appropriately in class and around the school. They relate warmly and respectfully to others. Pupils develop a good knowledge of world faiths and cultures, but have less understanding of these elements across modern Britain.
- Pupils make strong progress in developing their reading and speaking and listening skills. They use them to quicken their progress in other subjects.
- Provision for children in the early years foundation stage is outstanding.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should further develop the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers adjust the level of challenge to strengthen pupils' ability to solve mathematical problems and develop their writing skills more quickly
 - best practice is shared in the school so that strengths evident in some classes become the norm.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance should widen pupils' understanding of the diversity of cultures and beliefs evident in modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is unwavering in his commitment to improve the school. Three capable assistant headteachers work alongside the headteacher and have given him effective support over the past year. Their work as a united team has played a key role in moving the school forward and securing good teaching and learning. The team is well supported by governors.
- Senior leaders have made positive strides to raise the expertise and secure the effective work of middle leaders. Leaders have strengthened the way that they gather information about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Senior leaders implement effective procedures to recruit and retain staff. Leaders provide good support and training to improve staff skills and pupils' learning.
- Some developments are still relatively new and have not been in place long enough to have an impact on raising pupils' achievements. Strengths in teaching have not yet been shared across the school.
- Even so, some initiatives are bringing a rapid momentum of improvement. Teachers assess pupils' work and progress with increased accuracy and pupils are making faster progress. They are giving pupils clear guidance on how to improve.
- Leaders and staff work supportively with parents. This is evident in the overwhelming number of parents who expressed their great appreciation of the work of the school in their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Leaders identify clear priorities for development and take effective action to bring about improvement. Resolute action by the headteacher, in partnership with outside agencies and parents, has improved pupils' attendance substantially.
- Leaders give high regard to the promotion of equality of opportunity and are swift to eliminate any form of discrimination. Earlier this year, leaders identified differences between the achievements of boys and girls. They took decisive action to boost boys' interest in learning. Consequently, boys make better progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils' good reading, speaking and listening and computing skills demonstrate the school's secure capacity to improve in the future.
- The school provides a good curriculum that covers a full range of subjects. Teachers offer opportunities for pupils to further develop their computing, literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- At times, pupils' problem-solving and basic writing skills are not targeted quickly enough and this slows the development of these aspects.
- Teachers enrich the pupils' learning experiences through a range of visits, activities and clubs. The visit to Bodmin Jail and studies of art and poetry at the Burton Gallery widened their understanding, extended their skills and increased their interest in learning significantly.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils are taught about British values such as respect through relevant class and assembly themes. Pupils learn about democracy through elections to the school council and ethos team. World cultures and faiths, such as Christianity and Islam, are

covered in topic work and religious education lessons. However, pupils have yet to develop an understanding about the other faiths and cultures that are present within modern Britain.

- Leaders make sure that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is spent carefully. The effective support for these pupils enables them to make good progress.
- The primary sport premium funding is used effectively to enhance the school's already good-quality provision. Visiting specialist coaches develop staff and pupils' skills and increase pupils' participation in competitive team sports such as tag rugby and 'tri-golf'. Leaders encourage the widening range of sports offered to the pupils. New activities, such as multi-skills festivals and street dance, have proved very popular and are well attended.
- The local authority has provided useful guidance for school leaders to improve teaching since the previous inspection. Involvement by the local authority is now at a much lower level of assistance, acknowledging that the school demonstrates the capacity to sustain improvement.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective.
- Since the previous inspection, governors have responded to local authority reviews of their governance and to reviews that they have commissioned for themselves. They have significantly strengthened the way they fulfil their duties. Governors have re-organised their roles and established efficient procedures for checking and evaluating the work of the school.
- Governors have taken action to make sure that their strategic decision to establish a wider senior leadership is underpinned by systems for managing staff performance.
- Governors make regular and purposefully planned visits to meet staff and pupils. They receive detailed reports from senior leaders and visiting specialists to secure an accurate view of teaching and how it influences pupils' learning and progress. Governors use the information to question the leadership team and hold them to account for their work. They challenge staff leaders to demonstrate the effective use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. By these means, governors contribute to the school's continuous improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher, with support from other senior leaders and governors, ensures that thorough procedures for keeping pupils safe at school are implemented consistently. Staff training and checks, such as the vetting of staff, risk assessments of on-site facilities and off-site visits, are kept up to date. All staff liaise closely with parents to address any concerns at an early stage. Leaders are diligent in making necessary referrals to external agencies so that any pupils considered vulnerable are kept safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good and enables pupils to make increasingly rapid progress.
- Teachers respond to good training and development opportunities. They have

improved their management of pupils' behaviour to establish a positive atmosphere for learning.

- Teachers have strengthened their subject knowledge. They are questioning pupils to assess their needs more effectively than in the past. The staff's conscientiousness in addressing the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is a prime reason for their improved progress.
- Teachers share the information they have gathered about pupils with each other and with teaching assistants. By doing so, they make sure that planned experiences, support and guidance extend pupils' skills and understanding consistently. The tasks presented to pupils in Year 2 promoted their thinking and deepened their understanding of how to measure time.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are providing more specific guidance to the pupils than in the past, in accordance with the school's updated marking policy. This gives pupils the next steps that they need to improve.
- Teachers are questioning more effectively. This is having a positive influence on pupils' learning and is promoting faster progress, especially for the most able pupils. In most classes, pupils express their ideas and explain their thinking by answering teachers' questions in well-considered sentences.
- The most able pupils relish thought-provoking investigations. One example was when Year 6 were discussing the historical context of the Anne Frank story.
- Most teachers are making frequent and effective checks of pupils' responses and work in books to promote good progress. On occasions, though, a small proportion of teachers and teaching assistants do not stimulate and challenge the pupils enough. This slows the development of pupils' writing skills and the depth of understanding they need to solve mathematical problems.
- Teachers enlist the support of parents successfully to develop pupils' reading skills and promote a love of books from a very early stage.
- In the early years and key stage 1 classes, pupils make rapid progress in reading. This is because of the skilled teaching of phonics.
- Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to use computers to find things out for themselves. Pupils extend their reading, writing and number skills when researching topics such as Ancient Egypt.
- Teachers encourage productive links with parents so that pupils' learning continues at home and complements the work they do at school. On Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, parents acknowledged that their children receive a suitable amount of homework.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils form friendly relationships with each other and with adults. Pupils have improved their engagement in learning significantly in the past year.
- Pupils know how to stay safe. They talk knowledgeably about how to cross roads and use computers safely.
- Pupils show a clear understanding that bullying can take different forms and talk

sensibly about how to avoid cyber bullying when using computers. They know how to report any occurrences of bullying such as racism, verbal or physical bullying. They are swift to comment that 'Bullying rarely occurs at this school.' Pupils express confidence in the way that staff deal with it.

- Pupils understand why it is important to show respect and tolerance. Those on the school council agreed with the comment of one pupil who said, 'We should treat everyone the way we would want to be treated ourselves.' Pupils are less aware of the diversity found across many parts of Britain.
- Pupils enjoy taking on additional duties. They act as school councillors and members of the ethos group, where they discuss school life and make decisions which benefit others. Older pupils make supportive contributions to the learning of younger pupils when acting as 'reading mentors'. Pupils fulfil these positions responsibly.
- All staff are diligent in implementing well-considered safeguarding and welfare procedures to keep pupils safe.
- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View expressed the view that children are safe and happy at school. Parents conveyed appreciation of the high quality of care provided by staff and the way that views are respected and acted on by teachers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Those parents who spoke to an inspector and several who wrote additional comments welcomed the work of the school over the past year in improving pupils' behaviour and promoting increased enjoyment and success at school.
- Pupils agree, and say that behaviour is better now than in the past. Pupils respond well to school rules, clearly understanding and respecting how to play and learn safely.
- At times, pupils' behaviour and, increasingly, their attitudes to learning are outstanding, especially when stimulated by motivating activities. Pupils reflect quietly about issues during assembly. A minority need reminders to pay more attention and not to chatter in class.
- The headteacher has played a decisive role in tackling and reducing pupils' absence from school. This work included parents, carers and outside agencies. The rate of pupils' attendance, especially that of disadvantaged pupils, has improved substantially. It is above average currently, and contributes to the pupils' improving progress.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Committed leadership lies at the heart of the school's success. Leaders have raised expectations of what pupils should achieve.
- The exemplary practice in the early years leads to the children's outstanding progress. An above-average proportion of children reach a good level of development at the end of Reception, which is increasing year on year.
- Well-founded staff training has improved the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 1. As a result, pupils' achievement in Year 1 phonics screening checks and Year 2 assessments is above the national average.
- Leaders identified that pupils' results in key stage 2 showed improvement in reading, but weaknesses in writing and mathematics. This academic year, leaders acted to

develop key stage 2 teachers' skills and subject knowledge in these areas. This has secured an improved rate of progress. Pupils are working at higher levels currently.

- During the inspection, observations of pupils' responses in Year 5 and 6 and a scrutiny of pupils' work in mathematics revealed improving levels of understanding, such as when working with prime numbers. The scrutiny of pupils' books in Years 3 and 4 showed competent character descriptions in writing. Work was well presented.
- Occasionally, in a minority of cases, the basic writing and mathematical problem-solving skills of pupils, including the less able pupils, are not prioritised or developed quickly enough. The most able pupils make faster progress because teachers provide these pupils with thought-provoking and demanding tasks which deepen their understanding.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are benefiting from having their needs identified at an early age. This enables staff to provide tailor-made learning experiences which support faster progress.
- Leaders and teachers have re-adjusted the extra assistance provided for disadvantaged pupils carefully. This has meant that pupils are more confident and their basic literacy and numeracy skills are developing faster than those of other pupils nationally.
- Good attitudes to learning and well-developed computing skills, alongside improved literacy and numeracy skills, prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education when they leave Year 6.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The majority of children enter the Reception classes with skills that are below those typical for their age. The children are warmly welcomed and benefit from exceptional leadership and management and a range of stimulating learning experiences.
- The outstanding teaching and consistently high expectations of staff lead to children behaving extremely well and making rapid progress. As a result, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development across the areas of learning has not only continued to be above average, but has increased incrementally year on year since the previous inspection. By the time they leave the Reception classes, children are very well prepared for future learning in Year 1.
- The leader ensures that all welfare requirements are met fully. Children are kept safe at school.
- Parents are very appreciative of the high levels of care provided by staff and respond well to invitations to sustain highly positive relationships.
- A strong partnership between home and school underpins the children's confidence. This leads to warm and supportive relationships between adults and children. These help the children enjoy school and learn successfully.
- Leaders and teachers' effective use of assessment to identify children's varying skills lies at the heart of the school's early years provision. By identifying and targeting weaknesses in children's speech and language, staff advance these skills.
- Currently, staff are having similar success in developing the children's personal and social skills. Boys and girls are enthusiastic learners. Children engage in learning together and play happily. Children love taking turns at being 'health and safety officers'. They tidy away litter and equipment to make the classrooms and outdoor

areas safe for everyone.

- The early years leader is a highly motivated and knowledgeable practitioner who leads her team well. Staff in Reception classes expect that all children will succeed, whatever their circumstances and starting points.
- Staff work efficiently as a team. They gather as much information as they can about individual children in order to support their needs productively. Staff begin this process by liaising with a range of pre-school providers and establishing supportive lines of communication and relationships with parents.
- Staff use the wealth of information about the children to plan precise teaching and learning experiences to meet their different needs and abilities. Children, including the youngest and the most able, have the best possible start.
- Staff continue to adapt and re-focus their teaching and support to secure children's rapid progress. This includes making good use of additional funding so that disadvantaged children and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress too.
- From the moment children enter school, staff encourage them to explore new things together. During the inspection, children were observed joyfully sharing ideas when making music and creating their own table-top farm environments. The breadth and richness of the children's learning are evident in the digital photographs, samples of work and teachers' evaluations entered in the learning journals.
- The staff's focused questioning and careful modelling of language is evident across all learning activities. Children advance their numeracy, creative and physical skills to positive effect by counting equipment and playing in the 'mud kitchen' outdoor role play area.
- Children extend their resilience and good behaviour in learning as 'bumble-bee and tortoise learners'. They develop their writing skills by recording and displaying descriptions of themselves in speech bubbles.
- The expert teaching of phonics and the emphasis on enjoying books and stories means that children make excellent progress in developing their early reading skills.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 113385 |
| Local authority | Devon |
| Inspection number | 10019955 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 418 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Jerry Hope |
| Headteacher | Adrian Scarrett |
| Telephone number | 01237 477 288 |
| Website | http://www.stmarysce.co.uk |
| Email address | admin@stmarysce.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 23 April 2015 |

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is larger than the average primary school.
- The very large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly average.
- Children experience early years provision in two Reception classes. The other pupils across the school are also taught in single year group classes.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics

by the end of Year 6.

- The school is a member of the Atlantic Coast Co-operative Trust, which is a group of schools that work closely together.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 22 lessons and saw the work of nine teachers.
- The inspectors were accompanied by the headteacher and assistant headteachers during many of the visits to lessons.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures and the school's self-evaluation.
- The inspectors examined the school's systems for checking progress, and records of checks on the quality of teaching.
- The inspectors talked to individual pupils and representative groups of pupils about the school and about their work. They listened to individual pupils read and attended an assembly. The inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of subjects and classes.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with members of the governing body. He held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. Members of the inspection team held meetings with school staff, senior and middle leaders.
- The views expressed in the 124 online responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and 19 staff questionnaires were considered. In addition, the inspectors gathered the views of several parents during informal meetings at the school.
- The inspectors evaluated the school's use of the sport premium additional funding and the pupil premium funding.

Inspection team

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|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Alexander Baxter, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Martin Greenwood | Ofsted Inspector |
| Rachel Miller | Ofsted Inspector |

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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