

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Buckfast

Buckfast Road, Buckfast, Buckfastleigh, Devon TQ11 0EA

## Inspection dates

11–12 October 2016

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary school is a caring and nurturing place to learn. Pupils enjoy being part of the school community and they achieve well.
- The dedication, drive and ambition of the headteacher inspires governors, teachers and parents. A strong team of leaders support her in continuously improving pupils' learning.
- The governing body challenges leaders to fulfil their ambition to provide a good-quality education for pupils. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- The curriculum excites and engages pupils. It underpins the good outcomes that they achieve. There is a strong focus on academic, artistic, musical and physical activities.
- Although attendance is improving, some disadvantaged pupils and a small proportion of girls are absent on too many occasions.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils are confident; they work well together and are supportive of each other.
- Pupils make good progress in all key stages. Teaching increasingly challenges pupils to deepen their understanding and provide well-reasoned answers. However, a lack of academic challenge for some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able pupils limits the progress that they make.
- Accurate assessment and teachers' feedback tells pupils how successful they are in learning. However, pupils are less clear as to how they can reach the highest standards.
- Early years teaching and learning are good. Children in the early years get off to a strong start in the school because there is effective planning. Overall children progress well. However, there are some pupils, such as the most able, who could do even better.
- Parents are universally supportive of the school and are keen to praise the work of leaders.

## Full report

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

- Leaders should further improve teaching by:
  - developing more opportunities to extend the thinking and deepen the learning of the most able pupils, including in the early years
  - accelerating the progress of some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged
  - developing feedback so that pupils understand clearly what they need to do to improve their work and reach the highest standards.
- Further improve the attendance of a small number of girls and for some disadvantaged pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has established a welcoming and caring culture among all who work and learn at St Mary's Catholic Primary school. The school's values form the foundations of success and establish a strong pastoral and academic ethos. Parents and pupils are proud of the school and morale is high.
- Leaders continue to improve the quality of teaching and pupil learning despite significant staffing changes. A strong sense of teamwork and willingness to improve is helping teachers to secure better outcomes for pupils. Effective training for teachers has ensured that pupils are improving their skills in providing reasoned answers and in developing deeper understanding in literacy and mathematics.
- Additional funding effectively supports most disadvantaged pupils to make good progress. Additional one-to-one teaching and support to improve pupil self-esteem has resulted in pupils learning well. Pupils' health and fitness has improved because of effective use of sport premium funding. The dedicated sports coaching for all has capitalised on the success of the British Olympic team and has inspired more pupils to sample a wide range of sports.
- The curriculum offers a good breadth of study and a balance between different subjects. Carefully planned themes, including visits and home learning, are improving the level of pupils' and parents' involvement in each task. When pupils in Year 3 and 4 looked at 'what's under my feet?' they were excited to visit a cave and explore the transition from the stone age to the iron age.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social understanding is a high priority in the school and is developed effectively within the curriculum. Pupils have the opportunity to develop a good understanding of other cultures by studying other faiths and global issues such as the rainforest.
- An understanding of British values is developed well within the school curriculum and culture. The process of electing the school council reflects how democratic systems work. As pupils get older, they undertake roles with responsibility, such as being a school prefect or a 'buddy' to younger pupils.
- There is insufficient challenge from Plymouth CAST (the trust) to support and challenge leaders to improve the school. This has meant that leaders have had to commission their own external advice to support their own self-evaluation of the school. Although leaders have ensured a good quality of education for pupils, the trust has not adequately challenged them to account for the progress of different groups of pupils. This has resulted in a lack of precision in monitoring the patterns of achievement for the small number of pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and consequently not enough of these pupils progress to achieve the highest standards.
- Leaders have supported teachers in improving the quality of feedback to pupils. While pupils know what they have done well and what to correct, at times they are not clear about their next steps in learning.

## Governance of the school

- The governing body provides effective challenge and support to leaders, which continues to improve the school.
- Governors have developed their skills in order to have an independent view of the quality of provision at St Mary's School. They have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. However, governors do not monitor closely enough the attendance and progress of those pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The governing body has worked hard to ensure that the environment is as good as it can be. The recently opened Nursery and Reception room and outdoor area is well equipped and the new hall provides space for assemblies, lunch and sports.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet statutory requirements. Leaders work successfully with other agencies to protect children. They are tenacious in their follow-up to secure the best outcomes for each child.
- Pupils feel safe in the school and know about a range of potential risks, for example when using the internet and social media.
- The record-keeping to keep pupils safe is detailed, up to date and thoroughly administered. School leaders comply with the requirements of safer recruitment. Governors carefully monitor the school's safeguarding practice.
- Staff are trained thoroughly and are regularly updated on safeguarding. They are clear about their responsibilities with regard to keeping pupils safe from people who hold extreme viewpoints. Teachers know the level of vigilance required and what responsibilities they have when protecting pupils from risk of harm.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching continues to improve. Teachers plan effectively to help children learn well from a range of starting points. For example, well-chosen prompts enable the less able pupils to solve complex algebra problems that the most able solve independently.
- Pupils read aloud with enthusiasm, using the punctuation well to guide how to read with meaning. Additional support effectively tackles specific difficulties for the pupils who make slower progress in reading. The school achieves a good balance between giving pupils time to read in school and on their own. Pupils are encouraged to choose books that interest them, sometimes on a topic they are studying in school. Pupils from key stage 2 read with conviction and delight, to the inspector, poems they had written. Consequently, progress in reading is good and many pupils, including the most able, are avid readers.
- Additional adults make a good contribution to the achievement of groups of pupils or individuals. A carefully planned programme of training ensures that additional adults are well equipped to improve pupils' literacy and mathematical skills more rapidly.
- Recently there has been a focus on challenging the most able pupils to think more deeply. These pupils increasingly persevere with demanding learning when teachers

challenge them to deepen their understanding and extend their thinking. However, it is too early to gauge their progress towards reaching the highest standards.

- Assessment of pupils' work is accurate and increasingly thorough. Teachers work closely with staff from other schools to make sure that assessment is rigorous. Feedback to pupils helps them to recognise their successes. However, too many pupils are unsure of the next learning steps, particularly if they wish to achieve highly.
- Teachers and pupils enjoy positive relationships with each other. They help their pupils to become confident learners and take pride in their work. Key stage 2 pupils were able to explain to their class why they thought they had completed successful pieces of writing.

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

**Good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school community cares for everyone. It has strong school values that ensure all are welcome. New pupils to the school settle quickly as other pupils make sure that they are included. There is a strong sense of belonging to a close, supportive community. Parents are supportive and value the personal attention that their children receive.
- Pupils are confident and willing to grapple with challenging learning. There are strong expectations that they work hard. Pupils make sensible choices and respond quickly to instructions.
- Spiritual development is a high priority in the school. The close relationship with Buckfast Abbey results in frequent opportunities to expand pupils' study of Christianity and to develop a good understanding of other communities' beliefs.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Parents are confident that the school is a safe place for their children. Instances of bullying are rare and dealt with effectively. Pupils know who to talk to if they need to. The pupils who need extra help to settle in class are supported well and make good progress.
- Leaders organise effective personalised programmes that build pupils' self-esteem so they become better learners. Pupils stay safe when using the internet and social networking sites because of effective teaching about e-safety. Recently, key stage 2 pupils were able to watch a drama production that enabled them to explain what to do to reduce risks when online.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's caring community models the school's values effectively. Pupils develop respect for their peers and for people from different cultures. They are polite and work well together, including when they work and play with children of different ages.
- From the outset pupils develop positive attitudes, which mean they are keen to learn and willing to try harder tasks. They show resilience and maintain their concentration when doing demanding work. Pupils and parents speak in positive terms about the good behaviour that exists on a day-to-day basis.

- Attendance has improved and is now broadly in line with the national average level. At the same time the number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced. School leaders carefully monitor absence and routinely contact parents if there is a concern. Leaders work well with outside agencies and are willing to use legal powers if they need to. However, some disadvantaged pupils and a few girls still have too many days off school.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**Good**

- From different starting points, pupils progress well. By the end of key stage 2, progress is good, particularly in reading. In classes that cater for different year groups, pupils are working at appropriate levels for their age and ability.
- In Nursery and Reception, children make good progress in developing key skills. This is because teaching is good and their achievement is carefully checked. Consequently, they are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils now reach good standards in the Year 1 phonics screening checks, with leaders recently halting a previously declining trend. Pupils who are disadvantaged have strong support that ensures they reach the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 2. This represents good progress from their starting point.
- By the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils who make good or better progress in all subjects is higher than that achieved nationally.
- In 2016, at the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils making good progress overall was equally strong in reading, writing and mathematics.
- While pupils make good progress by the end of key stage 2, school assessment information and an analysis of pupils' work shows some unevenness in pupils' progress between year groups. Progress is particularly uneven for the most able pupils, including in reading.
- Most pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same progress as others. However, leaders recognise that greater precision is required to fully support their individual needs so that all achieve in line with their capabilities.
- Rigorous assessment of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills when they join the school in the middle of key stages supports them to achieve well by the end of key stage 2.
- Pupils make good progress across the curriculum. Their excitement and engagement with what is offered supports their good development in science, art, humanities, religious education and sport.

### **Early years provision**

**Good**

- When children enter the Nursery and Reception class a number are still learning how to listen carefully and follow instructions. Teachers focus well on these key skills and children quickly learn to respond and adhere to school routines.

- From a variety of different starting points, children make the progress they are capable of achieving. The proportion who are ready for learning in Year 1 is improving year on year.
- Children are keen to learn. Warm and trusting relationships result in children enjoying talking about what they are doing and showing their understanding. Children work well on their own but also show high levels of cooperation when they work together.
- The new leader responsible for the early years has established a new and vibrant learning area where children can develop their knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, there is still more to do for children to link learning between different activities, such as during play to blend sounds learned in phonics or form letters. Leaders accurately check how children are progressing and use this information to plan new learning effectively.
- Teaching is strong and practice continues to develop. The teaching of early phonics is good and this enables children to develop their literacy skills well. Imaginative displays of books and words engage children in reading activities. There is a strong focus on the enjoyment of reading to promote good progress.
- Precise and personalised planning ensures that teaching matches the learning needs of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This results in these children being fully included in all activities, and they make good progress.
- The safety of children is strong. Staff are vigilant and know how to report any concerns. There is no compromise on children's safety.

## School details

Unique reference number	140774
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10021136

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	academy trust
Chair	Father Francis Straw
Headteacher	Nicola Slack
Telephone number	01364 642 389
Website	<a href="http://www.st-marysrc.devon.sch.uk/">www.st-marysrc.devon.sch.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@st-marysrc.devon.sch.uk">admin@st-marysrc.devon.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School is smaller than the average primary school and is part of the Plymouth CAST. The Trust was formed in April 2014. The work of the Trust is overseen by a board of directors. The Trust is responsible for: one nursery; one first school; 32 primary schools and two secondary schools across seven local authorities in the south west region.
- The school joined the Trust and became an academy on 1 April 2014.
- At the time the school was notified of the inspection the school met the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school began to admit three-year-olds from September 2016.



- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who join the school in the middle of a key stage is higher than is typical of other primary schools.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector examined past and present pupils' performance and attendance data, school leaders' self-evaluation and the school's improvement plan.
- The inspector had discussions with an adviser from the trust and an officer from the local authority. He also held meetings with groups of pupils, governors, senior and middle leaders.
- The inspector examined a range of documentation. This included information concerning safeguarding, health, safety, and the recording of incidents.
- The headteacher and inspector made joint visits to classrooms to observe learning.
- Pupils were heard reading and the inspector scrutinised a variety of pupils' work, from the current and previous year, with the headteacher.
- The inspector took into account the views of 20 parents who responded to Parent View, conversations with parents and 13 written comments. He considered responses to the pupil and staff questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Mark Jenner, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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