

# St Mary's CofE (C) First School

Marston Road, Wheaton Aston, Stafford, Staffordshire ST19 9PQ

## Inspection dates

6–7 December 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	Good
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, between Years 1 and 4, pupils have not made good progress. By the end of Year 4, too few pupils reach the expected standards for their age. Pupils have left the school not well prepared for learning in Year 5.
- Pupils have gaps in their learning owing to weaker teaching in the past. Current teaching, although starting to improve, is not consistently good. Pupils are, therefore, not catching up quickly.
- Senior leaders do not use information about pupils' progress to check the achievement of those pupils with higher starting points.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not challenged sufficiently well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The most able pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their higher-order reading skills and do not use more advanced grammar and punctuation accurately in their writing. Their work in mathematics is too easy.
- The leadership of teaching requires improvement. Senior leaders' evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching lacks rigour and does not always identify precisely which aspects of teaching most need to improve.

### The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in the early years as a result of good teaching. They are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Pupils make good progress in phonics. This aspect of reading is taught well.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well.
- Pupils attend well and conduct themselves appropriately around the school. Pupils are well cared for.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. They learn about people from different cultures, which prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Governance has improved and is now effective. Governors are well informed and able to challenge and hold leaders to account.
- A more effective staff team is now in place, following a period of instability.

## Full report

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

- Improve teaching, by ensuring that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are effectively challenged, by:
  - ensuring that teachers give pupils work in mathematics that is appropriately challenging, given their starting points
  - checking that pupils apply appropriate grammar and punctuation skills consistently well in all their writing
  - teaching higher-order reading skills more effectively.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that senior leaders:
  - make more effective use of information about pupils' achievement to check if pupils, especially those who have higher starting points, are making sufficient progress
  - rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of teaching so that those aspects of teaching that most need to improve are identified clearly and improved.

# **Inspection judgements**

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

## **Requires improvement**

- The leadership of teaching is not yet as effective as it needs to be. Leaders do not use information about pupils' achievement to check if those pupils who have higher starting points are making sufficient progress. Some improvements in teaching are evident, as indicated by the rising standards in key stage 1. However, leaders do not use information rigorously enough to identify which aspects of teaching most need to improve. As a result, teaching and outcomes still require improvement.
- While leaders use pupil premium funding well in most cases and the majority of disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points, leaders have yet to ensure that disadvantaged pupils who are most able make the progress that they are capable of.
- Senior leaders have established an annual cycle of meetings which are designed to improve teaching. Individual teacher and whole-staff training needs are identified by senior leaders, who then design appropriate training. Staff say they value this support as it enables them to improve their teaching skills.
- Senior leaders have ensured that their recruitment processes are effective. New staff, including teachers who are newly qualified, are inducted into the school well. This has resulted in teaching being strengthened this year.
- The capacity for further improvement has been enhanced with recent appointments. For example, the newly appointed teacher who is responsible for English has worked with teachers to ensure that pupils are already writing longer and better presented pieces of work.
- The local authority provides effective support for St Mary's First School. Local authority representatives visit the school every term. During these visits, they meet with leaders and governors to discuss what the school needs to do to improve further. Subsequent visits are used to review what difference these actions have made. Local authority representatives acknowledge senior leaders' strong ambition for the pupils at the school and the effective work of governors. They also recognise the work that needs to be done to secure good outcomes for the pupils.
- The leader with responsibility for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was appointed at the start of this term. She has ensured that staff know what they need to do when they work with these pupils. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- Senior leaders and staff have designed and implemented effective schemes of learning based on the needs and interests of pupils in the school. They have checked that pupils are taught specific skills at specific times – making sure that pupils do not repeat work already covered. This is particularly important as some classes include pupils from different age groups. Pupils are provided with activities which interest them and they enjoy their learning. They value the educational visits to places of interest. These visits support pupils' understanding of different cultures and the wider world well.
- St Mary's makes effective use of its primary school physical education (PE) and sport funding. Leaders have employed sports coaches who offer a wide range of sports clubs

to pupils, including dodgeball and hockey. Coaches help teachers to develop their expertise in how they teach physical education. Pupils talk about their enjoyment of PE lessons and in their participation in different sporting activities.

- Leaders ensure that pupils learn about different cultures and faiths. Pupils talk clearly about their understanding of why it is important to respect people who have different beliefs. Pupils discussed British values, such as democracy and rule of law, with the inspector, demonstrating that the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governance is effective.
- Following the previous inspection, the local authority carried out a review of governance. Governors valued this scrutiny as it helped them understand the importance of challenging school leaders. Governors know about the quality of teaching and understand how leaders manage teachers' performance.
- Governors are now better informed than at the time of the previous inspection. They are able to challenge leaders effectively because they check pupils' achievement information with more care and attention. By making sure that school leaders attend meetings, governors are able to challenge them directly. This provides governors with sufficient information to hold school leaders to account.
- Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses. They visit school frequently and talk with staff, pupils, parents and leaders about school life, including learning, behaviour and safety.
- Governors ensure that funding is spent wisely. This includes funding for disadvantaged pupils and expenditure to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Governors are seeking ways to increase teaching assistant time for teaching disadvantaged pupils so that this group of pupils make better progress.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training. Sessions are led by the local authority and school leaders from both St Mary's First School and the school they are federated with. Training helps to ensure that staff are vigilant in spotting any signs of concern.
- Leaders understand the dangers that pupils might face in both the local and wider community. They ensure that staff follow agreed procedures which are designed to protect children.
- Throughout the school day, staff supervision of pupils is good. Pupils value this as they say that knowing where staff are helps them to stay and feel safe. Clear systems are in place through which any concerns about children's welfare are recorded and reported to senior staff.

- Through surveys, leaders know that parents, staff and pupils acknowledge the work of the school in ensuring that pupils are kept safe.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Prior to this academic year, weaker teaching has led to pupils not being secure in their learning. Gaps are evident in pupils' understanding, most notably in key stage 2, and these gaps are still to be closed. As a result, current pupils are not on track to meet the standards expected by the end of Year 4.
- Teaching has improved this year with a stable teaching team now in place. However, teaching is not yet consistently good. It does not challenge the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, sufficiently well in reading, writing and mathematics. The attitudes of higher-ability pupils are not as positive as their classmates. Other disadvantaged pupils are taught well.
- Teachers do not teach higher-order reading skills, including inference, frequently enough. This results in pupils not being confident or secure in tackling harder questions about the books they are reading. For example, very able readers were not clear about how the author had created suspense on the opening page.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Early reading skills are taught well. All staff carefully follow the teaching scheme, ensuring that pupils use specific strategies, including physical actions, to sound out words. Staff refer to such strategies in other lessons which helps pupils to embed the correct sounds and blends. This leads to pupils being secure in tackling new vocabulary. Pupils read fluently using these skills.
- Pupils' writing has improved over the past two years. Teachers ensure that they provide pupils with opportunities to write longer pieces, and hone their handwriting styles. While developing, the teaching of writing requires further improvement. The most able writers do not apply appropriate grammar and punctuation skills consistently well in their writing. At times, their writing does not convey their intended meanings clearly.
- Teachers give the most able mathematicians work that is too easy in this subject. For example, pupils repeat calculations in their books when they have already consolidated previously taught skills. Nevertheless, teachers and teaching assistants demonstrate secure subject knowledge in their mathematics teaching. They use this knowledge to question pupils of other abilities well. Pupils are taught relevant skills, including reasoning, in each year group.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are taught well. The school leader for special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures that teaching assistants know the barriers that prevent individual pupils from making good progress. Teaching assistants use this information, together with their own subject knowledge, to plan lessons which enable pupils to make good progress.
- Children in the early years are taught well. Staff provide children with activities which ensure that they think hard about their work. For example, during the inspection, children who had a good understanding of numbers were given problems to solve without resources to help them. This meant that the children had to seek out support from other areas of the classroom in order to solve the problems.

- New teachers are inducted well. They meet with senior leaders and receive handbooks which include policies and guidance about what is expected from their classroom practice. This helps teachers to provide effective support for pupils as soon as they begin teaching at the school.
- Teachers set homework that encourages pupils to think deeply and to present their work in imaginative ways. Teachers give pupils choices about how to present their work. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 researched facts about the Stone Age using the internet and then produced their own displays.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Positive relationships between staff and parents begin in the early years. These trusting partnerships continue through the school.
- Pupils work and play together well, respecting and valuing one another's views. They listen carefully and consider various opinions about topics being discussed. They are thoughtful and consider how their actions can help others in lessons and at breaktimes.
- Staff care for and guide pupils well. They talk with pupils throughout the school day, encouraging them to make the right decisions in their interactions with their friends. Parents understand how these relationships support their children, including those with specific learning needs. As a result, pupils' emotional well-being is promoted effectively.
- Bullying is rare. Pupils say that should any incidents occur, staff would deal with these quickly and properly.
- The teaching of what pupils need to be aware of when working and playing online is effective. Pupils know the dangers to look out for and what they should do if they become concerned. The school provides workshops for parents and governors which are designed to keep them up to date with current issues. These are well attended.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and at playtimes. They use good manners when they talk to their classmates and adults. This reflects their good understanding of the values at St Mary's.
- Parents, pupils and staff express positive views about behaviour. Pupils know what staff expect of them and follow these expectations at all times of the school day. This includes the breakfast club, where pupils settle well and are keen to engage with the activities provided by staff.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. As a result, learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils enjoy their learning and are keen to find out information about the topics they are taught. They develop good social skills, which enables them to listen to other people's

views and respond appropriately. This helps them to develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

- Pupils' attendance rates are good. School leaders monitor the attendance of all pupils closely. As soon as a concern is identified, staff talk with parents to ensure that their child's attendance improves. Pupils are punctual at the start of the day and for their lessons.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- In recent years, pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1 has been lower than that of other pupils nationally. Pupils did not make good progress from their starting points and were not well prepared for their move into key stage 2. However, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 improved last year. Pupils' attainment in mathematics was better than in reading and writing.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are making better progress this year than previously. This is because of better teaching. However, current pupils are unlikely to reach the standards expected by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4 because gaps are still evident in their learning.
- The most able pupils do not make the progress they need in order to attain expected outcomes by the end of each year. This group of pupils is not fully challenged in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In current cohorts, disadvantaged pupils make similar progress and attain similar standards to their classmates. Teaching addresses individual pupils' needs well for most pupils. However, disadvantaged pupils who are most able are not making the required gains in their learning.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. The newly appointed leader with responsibility for this group of pupils has quickly identified how best to support pupils with specific needs, checking to see if the teaching of this group of pupils is effective. She works well with staff to clarify how teaching will be adjusted if necessary.
- As a result of effective teaching, pupils build well on their strong understanding of phonics, secured in the early years. Therefore, many pupils read fluently in both key stages 1 and 2. Reading skills such as inference, however, are not taught often enough. As a result, while pupils enjoy reading, many lack the confidence to tackle complex questions about texts and extract deeper meanings from a piece of writing.
- Information presented by school leaders shows that pupils are doing better in writing this year than they did previously. Inspection evidence, from checking pupils' writing in books across a range of subjects, confirmed this to be the case. Even so, the achievement of the most able pupils in writing, such as the accuracy with which they use grammar and punctuation, requires further improvement.
- Pupils are also making better progress in mathematics this year. This is because of teaching that ensures that pupils have opportunities to both consolidate their understanding of mathematical facts and develop problem-solving skills. However, the progress of the most able pupils in mathematics, including the most able



disadvantaged pupils, continues to be hampered because their work lacks challenge.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children make a good start to their learning at St Mary's First School. This is because provision in the early years is effective. Children make good progress because they are taught well and presented with activities that challenge their thinking effectively.
- Children's starting points on entry to school vary from year to year, with children entering the early years with a wide range of abilities. However, many children enter the early years with skills that are lower than those typically seen nationally in most areas of learning. From their different starting points, children make good progress. This results in them leaving the early years well prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- Children leave the Nursery and move into Reception with minimal anxiety. This is because staff talk to one another about each child. This means that the Reception staff know about each child's personal and social development as well as their academic achievements. This information helps staff to plan activities that build on children's strengths and effectively address any weaknesses.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use their secure subject knowledge to question children well. They use questions to tease out responses from the children which enable them to check how well children understand what is being taught. For example, in a variety of activities children were asked to state and repeat specific words which they found tricky. Staff modelled how to sound out words, which strengthened the children's phonic knowledge.
- The indoor and outdoor learning environments are well organised. Children understand how they are expected to behave. They respond well, conducting themselves safely as they move between different activities. For example, children readily took turns and shared equipment sensibly without direct adult supervision.
- The early years leader is well supported by her staff and is effective. She ensures that children are well taught, motivated and enjoy learning across a range of subjects. Parents tell staff about their child's interests. They are kept well informed about how their child is progressing.
- The early years leader uses funding to ensure that disadvantaged children and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well. She ensures that pupils and parents receive good support from external agencies when needs are identified. This includes guidance for speech and language development.



## School details

Unique reference number	124284
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10020026

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Doreen Ellis
Headteacher (Executive)	David Swift
Telephone number	01785 840314
Website	<a href="http://www.st-marys-wheatonaston.staffs.sch.uk">www.st-marys-wheatonaston.staffs.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@st-marys-wheatonaston.staffs.sch.uk">office@st-marys-wheatonaston.staffs.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	23 September 2014

## Information about this school

- St Mary's is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It is federated with a local middle school.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes in the school. There are classes for the Nursery, Reception, Years 1 and 2, and Years 3 and Year 4. Children attend part time in the Nursery and full time in the Reception Year.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average.
- Most pupils come from a White British background. Very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- A before- and after-school club runs every day and is managed by the governing body.
- There are two newly qualified teachers. The deputy headteacher, appointed in January 2015, oversees the day-to-day running of the school.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all classes and visited small-group intervention sessions. He visited six lessons, two of which were observed jointly with either the executive headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, a local authority representative and the chair of the governing body and other governors.
- The inspector talked to pupils about their reading and listened to both higher- and lower-ability pupils read.
- The inspector examined work in pupils' books.
- The school's child protection and safeguarding procedures were scrutinised.
- The inspector observed the work of the school and looked at a range of documentation written to support school improvement, including minutes from meetings of the governing body.
- The inspector took account of the 24 replies to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with parents. He also looked at a recent parental survey conducted by governors and a survey completed by staff.
- The inspector reviewed the school's website.

## Inspection team

Jeremy Bird, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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