

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Holden Road, Salterbeck, Workington, Cumbria CA14 5LN

Inspection dates

14–15 November 2018

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils in key stage 2 have too many gaps in their reading, writing and mathematics skills. This is a result of previously weak teaching.
- In mathematics, pupils' insecure mental calculation skills slow their progress in solving mathematical problems.
- In some cases, teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' work are too low. For example, writing in different subjects and year groups is not of a consistently high standard.
- A culture of reading for pleasure is not fully embedded with pupils and their families.
- The use of assessment to plan activities is not fully established in early years.
- The most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to make the progress of which they are capable. As a result, few attain the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Middle and subject leaders are relatively new and still developing their leadership skills. As a result, too many responsibilities still lie with the executive headteacher and head of school.
- Governors lack the skills to assess how well the school is doing.
- The attendance of some pupils is too low. Leaders have taken positive steps to improve attendance, but some pupils miss school regularly. This hampers their learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher and head of school show resilience and passion in swiftly leading whole-school improvements. They have formed a new, skilled and effective teaching team who share their vision and aspirations for all pupils.
- Pupils' welfare and well-being take a very high priority. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive carefully planned support.
- Pupils do well in the phonics screening check in Year 1 as a result of effective phonics teaching.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, and is enhanced with trips and visitors to school.
- Leaders ensure that all pupils are safe in school. Pupils have good attitudes towards their learning. They show respect for each other and adults around the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - securing consistently good teaching across the school
 - developing the roles of middle and subject leaders so that they have a greater influence on improving outcomes for pupils
 - developing an assessment system in early years that informs both the planning of learning and early support for children who need it
 - continuing to work with parents to reduce the number of persistent absences
 - ensuring that governors have the necessary skills and understanding to accurately assess how well the school is doing.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise pupils' achievement, by:
 - giving pupils more frequent opportunities in mathematics to develop their mental arithmetic, in order to accelerate their problem-solving skills
 - building upon the actions already taken in key stage 2 to improve pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills and their application of these when writing across different subjects
 - embedding a culture of reading for pleasure among pupils and their parents
 - ensuring that the most able pupils are consistently challenged to enable them to do well for their age across the curriculum.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how the school may improve this aspect of its work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good across the school. As a result, pupils do not achieve consistently well across all year groups and in different areas of the curriculum.
- The executive headteacher and head of school have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and the areas for improvement. The executive headteacher has wisely instigated the support of the local authority. She has also brought in specialist leaders in education from the other school that she leads, to provide additional training and support for staff. The impact of the support is reflected in improved outcomes and progress for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2 in 2018.
- Since being appointed, the executive headteacher identified and eradicated inadequate teaching. With the appointment of many new teaching staff, the senior leadership team has established a harmonious and enthusiastic staff team. Teachers are keen to achieve the very best for all pupils and they share senior leaders' ambitions to raise standards.
- Significant changes in staffing mean that all leaders are relatively new to their roles. The skills of middle and subject leaders are not fully developed, so their impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is limited.
- Senior leaders have quickly introduced a broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders ensure that topic work is enhanced by trips and visitors to the school, which pupils clearly enjoy and appreciate. Teachers ensure that music and sport play an integral role in the life of the school; these experiences broaden pupils' horizons.
- Leaders plan opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through lessons, assemblies and events, such as charity fundraising. Leaders promote the school's Christian ethos in daily worship and visits to the local church. Staff teach pupils to develop values such as honesty and resilience.
- Senior leaders ensure that the pupil premium funding is now used to benefit disadvantaged pupils. There are specific interventions to support learning and to enable this group of pupils to participate in a range of opportunities in and out of school. During the last academic year the progress of disadvantaged pupils across all year groups was closer to that of other pupils in the school, but remained lower than that of other pupils nationally.
- The progress of pupils with SEND requires improvement. The head of school is now leading this area and has reformed the way in which additional funding is used. She has implemented individual education pathways related to the specific needs of pupils, including bespoke support from teachers and teaching assistants. When needed, the head of school sources external professional support from a wide range of agencies. Staff work effectively with these agencies, to particularly support pupils with very complex needs.
- Leaders use the specialist funding for physical education and sports to build pupils' confidence and teamwork. For example, there are coaching sessions from sports

specialists who work with pupils and also develop the skills of staff.

- The head of school has created a school website that meets statutory requirements and provides parents with a raft of relevant information.

Governance of the school

- Governors are reliant on external support from the local authority to build their capacity to contribute to whole-school decision-making.
- Governors now have an overview of the strengths and areas for improvement across the school. They support the executive headteacher's decision to broker support from the local authority and from the other school that she leads, to improve and monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All statutory checks are in place to ensure the suitability of adults working in school. Appropriate checks are made on visitors when they arrive at the school.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' safety is a high priority and that staff are vigilant. They make sure that staff receive regular and appropriate training to identify any signs of possible danger or potential abuse. Leaders have created a safe and caring culture in which pupils feel confident that they have someone to talk with if they are worried. Pupils spoken with during the inspection said that they feel safe in school.
- The procedures for reporting any incidents or concerns are very clear and understood by staff. The head of school continues to work with parents and other agencies to reduce the persistent absence of some pupils, as this interrupts pupils' progress.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Over time, the quality of teaching and learning has been inconsistent across the school and in different subjects. This is most evident in key stage 2, where there has been considerable turbulence in staffing. As a result, pupils have not made consistently good progress by the time they leave school. Current pupils have some gaps in their learning.
- The new team of teaching staff are reversing the trend of weak and often inadequate teaching. As a result, better progress and attainment of pupils in Year 6 in English and mathematics in 2018 illustrate a recent improving picture. Leaders and teachers have a dogged determination to sustain and build upon this improvement to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- In all subjects, teaching does not consistently provide pupils, especially the most able, with enough challenge to achieve work of the highest standard. There is often a lack of challenge or depth. Other pupils find work too hard because of gaps in their knowledge due to weak teaching when they were younger.
- Improving the teaching of mathematics is a priority. Across the school, pupils develop

their confidence in number, including place value and written calculations. However, pupils' ability to calculate mentally is insecure. This hampers their problem-solving skills and their ability to have a go at tricky work. As a result, some pupils, including the most able, do not make the progress of which they are capable.

- The teaching of writing over time has been variable. There are now regular sessions to improve spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers organise trips and visits to bring learning to life. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 went to see 'Matilda' at the theatre in Manchester during the inspection. This inspired pupils to write a detailed diary entry about their experience. However, teachers' expectations of the quality of writing from pupils are inconsistent across different year groups and different subjects.
- Senior leaders have invested in purchasing new books for pupils to read. Together with staff, they are developing a culture of reading for pleasure. However, this is not fully embedded. Parental engagement in listening to their children read at home is patchy.
- Pupils quickly develop their phonics skills and use these effectively to work out unfamiliar words. Teachers and teaching assistants check pupils' learning regularly to ensure that phonics teaching is closely matched to pupils' abilities. Pupils falling behind are given extra support to get them back on track.
- Across the school, teaching assistants provide valuable support for pupils, including those with SEND. Teaching assistants know these pupils well and support individuals and small groups with their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff know pupils and their families very well. The emotional needs of vulnerable pupils are well met through a range of initiatives and opportunities. Activities such as yoga are used to help pupils to relax and manage stress.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe, both online and in the wider community. The pupils spoken with during the inspection are confident that staff listen to any concerns that they have and take action to help them.
- Staff teach pupils to be thoughtful and considerate to others. Pupils take part in charitable fundraising events. Pupils show respect for each other and for the environment.
- Pupils are given opportunities to develop their independence and resilience. Outdoor residential trips encourage pupils to take part in team-building activities and to enjoy new experiences, such as climbing and canoeing. Older pupils enjoy visits to cities, including Manchester and London. These experiences help to develop pupils' confidence and prepare them well for their next stage of education.
- Through the curriculum, pupils develop a clear understanding of how to choose a healthy lifestyle. At lunchtime, pupils told inspectors about the importance of a balanced diet and regular exercise. Pupils talked excitedly about taking part in after-school clubs such as Lego, cookery and different sports clubs.

- All staff have high aspirations for pupils. This is reflected in pupils' ideas about their possible future careers, such as being a member of the armed forces, a vet, a police officer, a football coach and working as a palaeontologist.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Senior leaders have worked hard to create and successfully implement a new behaviour policy which clearly sets out high expectations across the school. This has had a positive impact and has led to significant improvements in behaviour. Pupils are polite and very welcoming and are a credit to their school. Staff have created a warm and friendly atmosphere and pupils clearly enjoy being in school. Pupils care for each other and are respectful to adults.
- Pupils report that incidents of bullying are very rare, and staff deal quickly with any rare misbehaviour. Staff, pupils and parents agree that pupils behave well. In classes, pupils listen attentively and work cooperatively. They are keen to learn new things.
- The head of school works tirelessly with families to improve pupils' attendance. Although there have been improvements in attendance, and overall this is now close to the national average, too many pupils miss too much school. This hinders their progress considerably.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because the progress that pupils make is not consistently good. This is primarily because of the lack of continuity and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning.
- The progress that pupils have made across key stage 2 since the previous inspection has been inconsistent. At the end of Year 6, the proportion reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics has been lower than the national average for the last three years. In 2018, the progress that pupils made in reading and writing improved to be in line with the national average. Although some improvement was evident in mathematics, progress remained well below that seen nationally.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was above the national average in 2016 and 2017. The dip in 2018 was a direct result of instability in staffing.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics has been consistently at or above the national average in the last three years. This is a reflection of how well teachers and teaching assistants engage the younger pupils in phonics sessions.
- Year 6 pupils' achievement in spelling, punctuation and grammar tests is too variable. However, in 2018 the proportion reaching the expected standard was close to the national average. The recent implementation of daily sessions to improve spelling, punctuation and grammar is clearly having a positive impact on improving this aspect of pupils' writing.

- Over time, too few of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, reach the standards that they should for their age and ability. These pupils do not gain greater depth in their learning.
- Scrutiny of disadvantaged pupils' work in their books, listening to them read and evaluating case studies show that these pupils are beginning to catch up in their learning, even when some disadvantaged pupils also have complex needs.
- Due to the overhaul of how pupils with SEND are assessed and supported, these pupils have shown that their progress is improving.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children start the early years with knowledge and skills which are below those typical for their age. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception is close to the national average.
- Assessment procedures in the early years are not refined. The systems to check how well children are learning and to plan the next steps are not systematically planned to match children's needs. Staff do not provide parents with detailed information on how they can build on their children's learning at home.
- Carefully planned and engaging activities support children's learning across different areas. Children enjoy plenty of interesting activities to develop their skills in mathematics and literacy. For example, during the inspection a small group of children were having great fun using different shapes to draw a house. They could describe the differences and similarities of squares and rectangles, compared to triangles and circles.
- Adults observe and interact with children as they play and learn. They use questions to help children to make links in their learning with things that they have done before. Children are engrossed in their learning and play cooperatively. This is because the activities that staff have planned hold children's interest and attention.
- Children are safe and looked after well. The environment is safe and secure; children use equipment safely. Risk assessments and first-aid provision are in place. All welfare requirements are met. Adults supervise children well in the indoor and outdoor classrooms. Children are calm and behave well, following instructions and working cooperatively together.
- There is an appropriate system in place to ensure that children make a smooth and successful start to school. Staff observe children in their nursery settings and meet with other professionals and with parents. This ensures that children are known well before starting school.
- All children in this small and friendly school are known by staff. Older pupils play with younger children and they mix well in after-school clubs and at playtimes. As a result, children moving into Year 1 are confident with the transition to their new class. Leaders have identified that children in the early years need to develop their independent learning to help them with the challenges of Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	112338
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10052947

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	156
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eddie Byrne
Executive Headteacher	Sheryl Slack
Telephone number	01946 830433
Website	www.stmarys-harrington.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stmarys-harrington.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 May 2012

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than the national average.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in February 2018. She had previously been providing support to the school. Together with the head of school, who was also appointed to her new role in February 2018, they have formed a new senior leadership team.
- All class teachers have joined the school within the last 18 months.
- The local authority and four specialist leaders in education from the executive headteacher's other school that she leads are providing support to improve teaching,

learning and assessment. The local authority continues to work with the governors.

- A pre-school known as 'Jack and Jill at St Mary's' operates from the school site and is subject to a separate Ofsted inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. Sessions were observed jointly with the executive headteacher and with the head of school.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, and with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors met with two groups of pupils from key stage 2 and talked with pupils in classes and also around the school.
- The inspectors listened to a small number of pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- A range of pupils' books and tracking records were scrutinised with the executive headteacher and the head of school.
- The inspectors spoke with a number of parents to seek their views and took into account the school's recent parent survey. There were no responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- The inspector scrutinised a variety of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation and development plan, minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance. A range of documentation regarding safeguarding was also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stephen Rigby	Ofsted Inspector
Cole Andrew	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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