

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Bessemer Road East, Swindon, Wiltshire SN2 1PE

Inspection dates

15–16 January 2019

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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher leads his team with integrity. He has an acute understanding of the many strengths of the school. His transparent and open approach means that aspects that require further work are tackled with a determination and drive to serve pupils and children well.
- The strong Catholic ethos and wide-ranging curriculum on offer support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils show a deep respect and kindness for one another. There is a strong sense of 'family' and 'belonging' here.
- Middle and phase leaders make a positive contribution. Their work is beginning to have a notable impact on raising pupils' achievement. However, there are some inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve across classes in the same year group. Leaders' checks on teaching have not yet remedied this discrepancy in full.
- Teachers' assessments are accurate. Pupils make good progress over time. However, on occasions teachers do not adjust their teaching so that it is closely matched to pupils' and children's needs. Some pupils with previously average or high attainment are not challenged sufficiently to achieve their full potential.
- Pupils are motivated and excited by their learning and are proud of their achievements.
- The teaching of mathematics is consistently strong. Pupils use and apply their knowledge to reason and problem solve with confidence.
- The additional funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the pupil premium fund are spent precisely on addressing pupils' learning and emotional needs. As a result, these pupils make good progress over time in reading.
- The teaching of writing is typically good. However, in a few classes, pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to practise and apply their writing. As a result, some pupils do not write with the complexity, cohesion and accuracy expected for their age.
- The teaching of phonics does not consistently deal with pupils' misconceptions. This hinders a few pupils' ability to catch up quickly and use the phonic code to read with the accuracy and fluency.
- Pupils enjoy school; their behaviour is consistently good. Parents are very positive about the education their children receive.
- Governors have ensured that pupils attain exceptionally well by the end of key stage 2. However, their work to ensure that pupils are challenged in every year group is too recent to have a discernible impact.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - phase leaders routinely hold teachers to account to ensure they have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve so that those pupils who have previously average attainment achieve their full potential
 - governors build on their recent work to hold leaders to account precisely for the progress and attainment of pupils in every year group
 - leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are refined so that any relative weaknesses in teaching and pupils' progress across classes in the same year group are minimised.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including in Reception, by ensuring that:
 - pupils are sufficiently challenged to practise and apply their writing so that more pupils write with complexity, cohesion and accuracy
 - the teaching of phonics enables pupils who have previously underachieved to catch up, so that they can read with accuracy, fluency and speed
 - teachers use their assessments consistently well so that they adjust their teaching precisely to meet the learning needs of all groups of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher's leadership of his team is impressive. He motivates staff and pupils and values everyone's contribution to school life. Consequently, staff and pupils alike aspire to do exceptionally well. Leaders have an acute understanding of the school's many strengths and also the areas that require further work. The school's self-evaluation is finely tuned and accurate. Over the last 18 months, leaders' challenge and support have enabled the school to continually improve.
- The headteacher's actions to develop phase leaders are paying off. Stage one of this training was to ensure that thorough leadership systems were in place and each phase was functioning well. This work has been very effective. As a result, teaching is good and pupils' attainment by the end of key stage 2 is strong. Stage two of this work is just starting. Subject leaders and middle leaders are now beginning to ensure that their work has a notable impact on raising the level of challenge in teaching so that more pupils with previously average attainment make consistently good progress over time in all year groups.
- Leaders make detailed checks on the progress that pupils make. However, leaders do not provide sufficient practical guidance and support to ensure that all pupils are challenged sufficiently. This means that some relative variations in pupils' progress and teaching persist in a few classes across the school.
- Leaders use the pupil premium grant to enhance teaching provision and provide emotional support for disadvantaged pupils. This is helping more disadvantaged pupils to read with accuracy and understanding. However, leaders recognise that a minority of these pupils do less well in writing across the school.
- The leader responsible for SEND, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), is effective. She ensures that funding is precisely allocated, and the right support goes into place so that eligible pupils do well. While pupils with SEND make good progress in core subjects, greater levels of checks are required to ensure that class teaching for these pupils meets their needs across all subjects.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is underpinned with a strong whole-school ethos and devotion to the Catholic faith. There is an overarching warmth and collective family feel that everyone shares. This strong sense of belonging ensures that pupils feel safe and supported both emotionally and academically.
- The additional sports premium funding is used exceptionally well. There are a wide range of competitive and team sports on offer. Sports coaches have developed staff expertise in teaching.
- Parents are very positive about the education their children receive. Almost every parent who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors play a strong strategic role in the school. They are forward-thinking and do not shy away from challenging leaders about ensuring that the school continuously serves its community well. They fulfil their statutory duties.
- Strong strategic thinking has enabled the expansion of the school to open the Nursery class this term. Governors accept that their attention has been on this aspect of school development in recent months. As a result, while governors have secured temporary senior leaders to work alongside the substantive part-time headteacher, governors have not yet started the recruitment processes to secure this permanent leadership position.
- Governors have a strong grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school because they receive comprehensive information from school leaders. They commission regular leadership visits with an external consultant to gain an external view of the school's effectiveness. As a result, teaching has improved over time. However, governors' own work to check the impact of leaders' actions to improve the remaining relative weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment, and pupils' achievement, is only just starting.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Staff training is up to date and in line with current guidance. Staff apply their training well to keep pupils safe. Staff recruitment checks are conducted in line with current legislation. When safeguarding audits take place leaders are swift to tackle any minor actions identified.
- Safeguarding records are organised systematically and show appropriate detail. Leaders with the designated responsibility for safeguarding are competent in working with external agencies and proactive and timely in the referrals that they make.
- Pupils feel safe and value the specific training in e-safety they receive. Pupils demonstrated a good understanding of how to keep safe at school and online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils make good progress in a range of subjects because teaching is typically good. Teachers and teaching assistants work in partnership to ensure that pupils' learning needs are met well over time.
- Teachers' assessments are usually accurate and used to plan work that builds on what pupils already know. However, on occasions, teachers do not adjust their assessments precisely enough so that pupils routinely deepen their understanding of the concepts being taught.
- The teaching of mathematics is strong. Sequences of teaching in mathematics are well thought out and this enables pupils to become fluent and confident in using number. Pupils use and apply their knowledge to solve problems and reason in mathematics very well.
- The teaching of writing is mostly good. Teaching enables the vast majority of pupils to

write with the complexity and accuracy expected for their age. However, teaching in a few classes does not allow pupils to have sufficient opportunity to practise their writing skills. As a result, teaching does not challenge the most able and middle-attaining pupils well enough.

- The teaching of reading enables pupils to read with the accuracy and understanding expected for their age. However, there are relative variations in the level of challenge that pupils receive across classes in the same year group. On occasions, teaching is not closely matched to pupils' needs or does not provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to expand their ideas and deepen their understanding of the texts they read consistently well. In these classes pupils' progress is not as consistently good as in others.
- Teaching activities enable pupils to use and apply their knowledge in a wide range of subjects. Pupils spoken to exude a deep enthusiasm for the full range of subjects that they are taught. Inspectors found that pupils retained the knowledge they have been taught exceptionally well. This enables pupils to make connections between subjects and units of work well.
- The teaching of phonics enables most pupils to read accurately. However, teaching does not consistently help pupils who have previously struggled in Year 1 to secure the phonic code to read accurately and catch up. Teaching does not deal with pupils' misconceptions well enough. Leaders have not picked up this aspect and provided staff with the practical guidance they need to improve the impact of their teaching.
- There are relative weaknesses in the impact of teachers' questioning to deepen pupils' understanding of teaching concepts across classes in a few year groups. Leaders are aware of these differences. However, they have not yet been successful in remedying these discrepancies in full. As a result, teaching does not enable some pupils with previously average attainment to achieve their potential.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils feel a strong sense of 'wholeness and belonging'. Pupils are self-assured and confident. They understand the important part they play in making their school unique and special. Because of the strong ethos, pupils value everyone's contributions and everyone is warmly accepted and cared for. Older pupils support younger ones thoughtfully and with kindness.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare. They have confidence in staff to sort out any issues quickly. Pupils work and play well together and report that they feel safe and well supported by staff. Most pupils take pride in their work and are excited by the learning and curriculum on offer.
- Pupils are proud of their school. Those pupils in leadership roles, such as Year 6 prefects, feel privileged to serve the school community and take their responsibilities very seriously. The pupil chaplaincy team lead collective worship for their peers with confidence and respect. As a result, other pupils further down the school look up to the prefects and the chaplaincy team and aspire to develop their leadership skills too. Pupils have high aspirations and see their journey through school integral to ensuring

that they are prepared for secondary school and their onward life experiences.

- The breakfast and after-school clubs provide a safe and calm start and end to the school day. Pupils' supervision at lunchtimes and breaktimes is also good.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They demonstrate positive attitudes and pride in their school. Consequently, the school is a calm and orderly environment where pupils can excel.
- Pupils are respectful to one another. They abide by the school rules and almost all present their work well. Pupils enjoy attending school.
- Pupils' attendance has been above the national average for a number of years and continues to be so. However, a small number of disadvantaged pupils do not attend regularly enough.
- Rates of exclusions are consistently low.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over a number of years pupils have been very well prepared for secondary school. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6 they make strong progress in reading, writing, mathematics and in a full range of subjects.
- Over the last three years, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 have been well above the national averages. The proportions of pupils who leave the school with knowledge and skills above those expected for their age are also high. Pupils' progress in mathematics is in the top 5% of schools nationally.
- At key stage 1, historically pupils' attainment has been above the national average. In 2018 pupils' attainment dipped in reading and writing to be in line with other schools nationally. Current pupils make good progress overall. However, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to expand and deepen their ideas when writing. This hinders some pupils' ability to practise their writing and write with accuracy and complexity in advance of their age.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the standards that are required in the phonics screening check in Year 1 has been in line with the national average for the last few years, but it has declined over time. Current pupils' progress in phonics is too variable because some pupils do not master the phonic code quickly enough. As a result, this hinders a minority of pupils from reading accurately and fluently.
- Pupils in key stage 2 read widely and often and most demonstrate a good understanding of what they read. However, there is variation in the levels of challenge across classes in a few year groups. Consequently, some books that pupils choose to read are too easy and do not deepen their understanding.
- The vast majority of pupils across the school read, write and use their mathematical knowledge and skills in line with or above those expected for their age. Leaders have heightened teaching expectations even further across the school because they recognise that some pupils with previously average attainment could do even better in Years 1, 3 and 5.

- There are some inconsistencies in the progress made by pupils of the same age across different classes. This comes about because pupils with the same starting points receive work of differing expectations. As a result, this hinders pupils' progress and ability to practise and secure knowledge so that they achieve well. Current work to remedy this weakness is recent but is already beginning to pay dividends.

Early years provision

Good

- In its first few days of opening, the Nursery is already proving to be a welcoming and stimulating environment for children to learn, develop and grow. Staff are nurturing and supportive. As a result, the children are settling quickly and enjoy their learning. Learning inside is structured well and a wide range of exciting and motivating experiences are on offer. The development of the outside learning environment is in its infancy and does not yet enable pupils to have sufficient access to outdoor play. Plans are already in place to improve this aspect of provision.
- Children in the Reception classes benefit from a well-developed outdoor space. Inside learning spaces are used creatively and provide a wealth of interesting activities to develop children's curiosity and imagination well. Early reading, writing and number are also prioritised. As a result, most children make positive gains in their learning.
- Teachers and adults know each child well and use the information they have to ensure that children's interests and knowledge are built upon precisely. Consequently, children have strong relationships with adults and peers alike.
- The knowledge and skills that children have when they leave the early years have improved markedly since the last inspection. The proportions of children who reach the standards that are expected for their age have been above the national average for the last two years. As a result, most children are prepared well for Year 1. However, the proportions of children who exceed the early learning goal in writing are considerably lower than in other areas of learning.
- The strategic leadership of the early years has improved noticeably since the last inspection. Governors and senior leaders have a wealth of information about children's ongoing performance. Leaders and teachers have detailed professional discussions to identify gaps in children's learning. However, leaders' checks on teaching and children's progress do not yet lead to sufficient practical guidance and support to develop children's grasp of specific areas of learning. This aspect of leadership is less effective.
- Adults use their assessments to plan teaching that supports most children well over time. However, some adults' assessments are not used precisely enough to adjust their teaching so that children's gaps in their language development are remedied quickly. Consequently, some children who enter the setting with poor speaking skills do not get the support they need to catch up rapidly, hindering their access the full curriculum on offer.
- Statutory welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	137147
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10058352

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	371
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Anne-Marie Long
Headteacher	Andrew Henstridge
Telephone number	01793 523850
Website	www.st-marys.swindon.sch.uk
Email address	head@st-marys.swindon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 May 2015

Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a single academy trust. It opened as an academy in 2011. On 5 January 2019 the academy changed its age range to accommodate nursery-age children.
- The school is part of Clifton Diocesan Education Consortium. The school is designated as having religious character and received a section 48 inspection in June 2015.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND or who are supported by an education, health and care plan is below average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in visits to lessons across the school, and reviewed pupils' work in books across a wide range of subjects.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils to seek their views about the school. Inspectors also listened to the views of pupils during lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors listened to pupils read from Years 2 and 5.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, phase leaders, and the SENCo. An inspector met with the school's external adviser. A meeting was also held with two members of the governing body. An inspector held an additional telephone conversation and meeting with the director of education of Clifton Diocese.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of school documents including: the school's action plans; the school's view of its own performance; pupils' performance information; minutes of governing body meetings; records relating to behaviour; checks on teaching and learning; pupils' attendance information; and a range of safeguarding records.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at lunchtimes and breaktimes, and around the school.
- Inspectors considered 33 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and the responses from the free-text service. Inspectors also talked to parents during the inspection to seek their views of the school and the education that their children receive. Inspectors talked to a range of staff and pupils to gather their views.
- An inspector visited the breakfast and after-school clubs.

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lizzy Meadows	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Berry	Ofsted Inspector

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