

# St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Link Lane, Pulborough, West Sussex RH20 2AN

## Inspection dates

22–23 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils have declined since the previous inspection. The rates of progress that pupils have made across key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have been well below the national averages in recent years. Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 has been variable.
- The quality of teaching varies across key stages 1 and 2. Some teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, but others expect less of pupils, and so they achieve less well.
- Senior leaders' self-evaluation document paints an overly positive view of the school. It does not reflect the clear understanding that leaders have of the areas that need most urgent improvement.
- The school's development plans lack precision and are not focused on the impact that actions are intended to have on pupils' outcomes.
- Too many pupils are persistently absent from school, especially disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Although rates of attendance have increased sharply this year, they are still below the national average for primary schools.
- Governors do not systematically check on what senior leaders tell them. This limits their ability to hold leaders stringently to account for important aspects of the school's performance.
- The school's assessment and tracking systems do not enable senior leaders to form a clear view of how well different groups of pupils are progressing across the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- Since taking up the post in April 2018, the acting headteacher, together with other senior leaders, has brought about key improvements. Poor behaviour has been eradicated and pupils behave well and enjoy learning.
- Parents and staff are very positive about the improvements that the leadership team has made. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is balanced and stimulating.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the early years. During a period where outcomes dipped in the rest of the school, children have continued to make very strong progress in the early years. This is due to outstanding leadership and high-quality teaching.
- New approaches to teaching, for example in mathematics, are beginning to lead to better outcomes for pupils.

## Full report

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

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - the self-evaluation document provides an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement
  - development plans contain measurable success criteria that enable leaders and governors to evaluate the impact of their actions on improving outcomes for pupils
  - systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress provide leaders and governors with a clear picture of how well different groups of pupils are progressing from their various starting points
  - governors check thoroughly that the information they receive is accurate, and thus are able to make better use of it to hold leaders stringently to account
  - senior leaders and governors use the pupil premium funding effectively to overcome barriers to learning so that improvements in the attendance and attainment of disadvantaged pupils continue.
- Improve the quality of teaching and thereby rapidly improve outcomes for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, by ensuring that all teachers:
  - have the same consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, including in the presentation of their work
  - make effective use of assessment information to set work at the right level of challenge for all pupils, including for pupils with lower prior attainment
  - provide regular opportunities to develop pupils' vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skills in reading so that pupils' can confidently infer and make deductions in a wide range of texts
  - enhance pupils' stamina and fluency in reading.
- Further raise parental awareness of the importance of regular attendance at school so that pupils' attendance continues to improve rapidly and levels of persistent absence decline to be at least in line with national figures for primary schools, especially for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The school has gone through a turbulent time during which outcomes fell sharply. In the past, senior leaders had not focused on securing improvements in the quality of teaching. Behaviour deteriorated and the number of exclusions was well above the national average. Parents and staff lost confidence in the leadership of the school and morale sunk to a low ebb.
- Senior leaders now have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school together with the areas in need of most urgent improvement. However, the school's documentation does not reflect this, as it paints an overly positive view of the school. Improvement plans lack measurable success criteria by which leaders can evaluate the success of their actions and by which governors can hold them to account.
- In the past, senior leaders have not held teachers rigorously to account for the quality of their teaching. Since taking up post, the current leadership team has prioritised improving the quality of teaching and increasing the accountability of staff for the progress of pupils in their care. Staff understand and embrace these higher expectations and the quality of teaching is improving in most year groups.
- Leaders monitor pupils' progress, but this requires greater clarity and accuracy. Leaders struggle to explain how well different groups of pupils are achieving and to evaluate the progress that they are making. This limits leaders' ability to evaluate the impact of their actions on strengthening progress across the school. Leaders focus mainly on pupils' attainment, without systematically evaluating the progress of different groups of pupils from their different starting points.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has not been used effectively, as it has not led to good progress for these pupils. Although senior leaders have a good understanding of the problems faced by disadvantaged pupils, there are no measurable success criteria to judge the effectiveness of their work. While leaders can explain the actions that they have taken, they do not evaluate the impact of the spending to improve outcomes and raise attendance for these pupils.
- Since taking on the role in April 2018, the acting headteacher has united the school community in a drive to improve the quality of teaching and thereby outcomes for pupils.
- Starting by successfully tackling widespread poor behaviour, she has, together with senior leaders, nurtured a harmonious, happy school community. Staff and parents alike speak highly of the way in which the school has greater consistency of practice, better communication, and higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. One parent said, 'the current school leader has effected a positive change to both the behaviour and the learning of the children.' Many parents echoed this opinion. A number of staff expressed a very similar view.
- Several middle leaders are newly in post. Senior leaders have provided them with coaching, support and training. Middle leaders are well informed about their subjects and have plans to improve provision further. However, in common with the school's overall development plans, these subject plans do not contain specific success criteria

to evaluate the success of leaders' actions.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It offers pupils the chance to deepen their subject-specific knowledge and skills across a wide range of subjects. Learning is supplemented by visits to stimulating places such as the Submarine Museum in Gosport and Chichester Cathedral. Visitors also help to bring learning to life. Recently, pupils learned about birds of prey by observing some that had been brought into school.
- The curriculum provides well for pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They learn to understand different faiths, while gaining a good knowledge of Christianity. Pupils tackle moral questions, for example in exploring the balance between rights and responsibility. Pupils learn about places, people and cultures across history and around the globe and raise money for various charities, both local and overseas. They become involved in community projects to further their cultural understanding. For example, pupils designed a dragon head from recyclable materials for use in a local carnival procession.
- The physical education and sports premium is used effectively to increase the range of sports and activities on offer to pupils, including participating in competitions with other local schools. This year, leaders have targeted increasing the proportion of pupils who can swim 25 metres by the end of Year 6.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors are fully aware of the decline that has taken place in recent years. They challenged the senior leadership of the school throughout this time using performance management and other tools of accountability available to them. However, their efforts did not bring about the much-needed improvements in the leadership of the school until the current acting headteacher took over in April 2018.
- Governors know the most urgent areas for improvement but are limited in their ability to drive forward improvements because the school's improvement plans lack clear, measurable success criteria.
- Governors are ambitious for the school and have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Governors sensibly use a number of different sources of evidence, such as visits to classes, when finding out about the school for themselves. However, they have not got an accurate enough view of how effective different aspects of the school are. This is because governors do not use the information from their checks to challenge leaders and hold them stringently to account.
- Governors have ensured that the acting headteacher is well supported in her role. They have worked with the local authority to provide her with the mentorship of an experienced local headteacher to offer regular advice and expertise.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff are very clear about their responsibility to look after pupils and be vigilant to signs that any may be at risk. Senior leaders have ensured that staff have up-to-date training in all aspects of safeguarding practice, including the potential risks of radicalisation and child sexual exploitation.

- Records of concerns are detailed and thorough because all staff understand how to report them promptly and accurately. As a result, pupils are safe in school and are confident in the adults who look after them.
- All aspects of the administration of safeguarding are carried out thoroughly, including pre-employment checks to ensure that only suitable people are allowed to work in the school. Governors play a valuable role in checking that these checks meet statutory requirements.
- Senior leaders are not complacent. They audit all aspects of safeguarding thoroughly in an annual survey, using their findings to address any weaknesses that come to light and strengthen safeguarding practice further.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable across key stages 1 and 2, but is improving in most classes. Some teaching is based on high expectations of what pupils can achieve and, as a result, they rise to these challenges. At other times, pupils are presented with work that is either too easy or too difficult. Sometimes pupils with SEND struggle because work is not well matched to their prior learning and needs.
- Senior leaders recognise that in the past weak teaching prevented pupils from achieving well and making strong progress. They have begun to raise teachers' expectations of pupils' learning and achievement. However, raised expectations are not yet consistent across all subjects and classes. Leaders and teachers have made changes to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics which have resulted in improvements in some parts of the school.
- The teaching of writing is variable because teachers' expectations are inconsistent. Senior leaders have introduced new approaches to the teaching of writing. These are designed to increase levels of challenge and also to ensure topics for writing have a wider appeal. While there is some evidence that these strategies are having an impact, there has not been time for them to be fully reflected in the quality of pupils' written work. As a consequence, improvements in pupils' progress in writing are inconsistent.
- The teaching of phonics in Year 1 is effective. Pupils learn to use and apply the rules of phonics so that they can decode texts accurately. However, younger pupils do not have enough time to practise and reinforce their reading skills so that they can develop greater fluency and stamina by the end of Year 2.
- Across the school, pupils read regularly. At times, planned activities to develop pupils' comprehension of more complex texts lack challenge. They do not always enable pupils to develop their knowledge of the vocabulary or the skills they need to infer and make deductions. Leaders have focused closely on pupils at the upper end of the school to ensure that they are better equipped with the reading skills and vocabulary knowledge needed for the next stage of their education. Improvements in the teaching of reading are leading to better outcomes, especially in Year 6.
- Pupils have a wide range of books to choose from and this contributes to developing positive attitudes to reading. For example, when learning about the explorer, Ernest Shackleton, pupils accessed a variety of books about his life. These books fuelled pupils' interest in the topic as well as their appreciation of the wealth of information

that books can provide.

- New approaches to the teaching of mathematics are providing pupils with a more secure foundation of understanding in the subject. Through the use of a range of different approaches, pupils develop a clear understanding of the topic being learned. There is evidence from across the school that new approaches are developing pupils' confidence and independence in mathematics.
- Work in pupils' mathematics books shows that where teaching is most effective, teachers move pupils on quickly as soon as it is clear that pupils have fully mastered the topic. Pupils have regular opportunities for reasoning and solving quite challenging problems. This is leading to improvements in outcomes for mathematics.
- As a general rule, teachers tackle pupils' misconceptions quickly due to improvements in their own subject knowledge.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy learning and mostly work hard in lessons. They show positive attitudes to their learning and to each other. In lessons pupils learn well together. They work equally well independently or with classmates, as the need arises. Pupils cooperate and listen to each other's ideas and this creates a happy, harmonious school. Only when the lesson fails to fully engage their interest does their focus drift away from the task in hand.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe, including online. They understand how to recognise and report any concerns. Visits from people such as the fire service and a dental nurse help them to understand how to stay out of harm's way and develop healthy habits.
- The welfare of pupils is at the heart of the school's work and pupils know that adults care about them and will listen to them. Leaders work with a range of external agencies and experts to secure effective support and help for vulnerable families including for raising their attendance.
- Incidences of bullying have reduced considerably since the acting headteacher took up post. Everyone agrees that this is true. Any incidents of bullying behaviour are quickly dealt with by members of staff.
- The quality of presentation of written work in pupils' books is of a variable quality. At times, work is presented neatly, but at others, work is less careful and pupils show much less pride in their work.

### Behaviour

- Although much improved, the behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Rates of absence have been above the national average for primary schools in recent years. In particular, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND miss too much time in school and this slows the progress that they make.
- The acting headteacher is leading a successful drive to improve attendance. Pupils are in school much more regularly this academic year and the overall figure is close to the national average for primary schools. There are clear signs that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND is improving, but too many pupils are still persistently absent.
- The acting headteacher wasted no time in tackling pupils' unacceptable behaviour as soon as she took up her role. Behaviour in the school has been transformed and the school is a much calmer, happier place. There have been no exclusions since she took over, whereas there had been many in the previous term. All staff, pupils and parents recognise the positive impact that this has brought about and how pupils are now able to learn in class without disruption.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is of a very high standard. Pupils are polite to each other and to adults. Inspectors were regularly offered a cheerful greeting by pupils, who often opened doors for them.
- Behaviour in assembly is impeccable. Pupils respond to consistently high levels of expectation for behaviour. They listen carefully, sing enthusiastically and take time to think and reflect on the ideas being talked about.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Outcomes are too variable to be good and have declined since the previous inspection.
- The progress that pupils have made across key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics has been well below national figures for the past three years. Progress in writing improved in 2018, but until recently progress in mathematics and reading has shown little sign of improving. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is similar to that of others in the school, but has been well below the progress of other pupils nationally.
- This weak progress has led to key stage 2 outcomes that have been well below the national averages in recent years. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected and greater depth standards in writing improved in 2018, but was still below national averages.
- Outcomes in reading and writing at the end of key stage 1 dipped in 2018 and were below national averages compared with the previous academic year, when pupils' attainment was broadly in line with the national averages.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved above the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2018 increased compared to previous years and was well above average. However, the proportion achieving the check in Year 2 in 2018 fell to below national figures. This was a decline compared with previous years when all but a tiny handful of Year 2 pupils achieved the standard.
- Pupils currently in the school are making stronger progress than previously in most year groups because of more effective teaching. Some of this is enabling them to catch



up lost ground from the last three years of slow progress. This is true in mathematics, where changes to approaches to the teaching of this subject mean pupils are challenged more effectively and have more opportunities to deepen their learning. Similarly, teaching in writing in some year groups is resulting in better outcomes, although the picture is less consistent than in mathematics. Boys typically achieve less well in writing than girls.

- Pupils of middle and higher ability are making the strongest progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND slows especially because of absence from school.
- Pupils in Year 6 are making strong progress because teachers have used assessment information to understand where there are gaps in their learning and are addressing them effectively.

### Early years provision

### Outstanding

- During the time that the rest of the school suffered a decline in outcomes, children's achievement has been consistently strong in the early years. This was because of highly effective teaching and leadership.
- Some start school at a level of development below what is generally expected for their age. However, strong teaching ensures that all children make excellent progress and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders are strengthening links between early years and Year 1 so that the curriculum and learning in Year 1 can better build on the very strong start children make in early years.
- Leaders track children's progress carefully and use this information to ensure that none fall behind. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been above that seen nationally in recent years and in 2018 was well above the national average.
- The leadership of the early years is outstanding. The leader has considerable experience of leading the early years and has a great deal of expertise which ensures that all staff working in the early years are thoroughly trained. As a result, adults extend children's knowledge through carefully planned activities. Children with SEND have their needs very well met and highly effective support is put in place.
- Children learn and follow clear routines which enable uninterrupted access to learning. These routines support their excellent behaviour, as they quickly learn to play together, take turns and cooperate.
- Children engage fully and enthusiastically in the many learning opportunities that staff plan for them. They have wholly positive attitudes to learning and achieve well in the rich learning environments that extend their knowledge, understanding and skills in all areas of learning.
- Children develop strong learning habits. They persevere when things are not easy at first. Children sustain concentration well and stick to tasks for extended periods. They enjoy talking about their learning to their classmates and to adults.
- Leaders and teachers make good use of the forested area of the school grounds to provide children with a wide range of learning opportunities. Children learn about managing risk by using real tools and cooking on open fires. An inspector observed



children completely absorbed in a wide range of activities in this area.

- Right from the start, children are taught phonics. They confidently apply their phonic knowledge and skills when reading and writing.
- Parents have many opportunities for contributing to children's education, so that news and successes from home are shared in school. This helps to create a detailed picture of each child's strengths and next steps in learning. Parents can see their child's work and the progress that they are making. One parent commented, 'I can really see how much has already been learned in such a short time.'
- Transition arrangements for children starting school are very effective so that they settle quickly. In order to ensure arrangements are bespoke, staff visit local nurseries during the summer term and, in turn, children visit the school to meet the current children in Reception and the staff.
- All welfare and safeguarding requirements are met. Staff have the right training and expertise, including paediatric first-aid training. This helps to ensure that children are safe whatever they are doing in school.

## School details

Unique reference number	126048
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10058180

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

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	355
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr John Peat
Acting headteacher	Mrs Sam Copus
Telephone number	01798 872007
Website	<a href="http://www.st-marys-pulborough.w-sussex.sch.uk/">www.st-marys-pulborough.w-sussex.sch.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@st-marys-pulborough.w-sussex.sch.uk">office@st-marys-pulborough.w-sussex.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	19–20 March 2015

## Information about this school

- St Mary's Church of England Primary is a voluntary-aided school located in the village of Pulborough.
- The current acting headteacher took up this role in April 2018. The previous headteacher took over the school soon after the previous inspection.
- This is a larger-than-average primary school. In most year groups there are two classes, although there is a mixed-age Year 1 and 2 class.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average. Levels of deprivation are below those seen nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who are from ethnic minorities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is well below that seen nationally.

- The proportion of pupils with SEND is in line with that seen in other schools across the country.
- The school had its most recent inspection of denominational education and the content of the school's collective worship, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, in November 2014.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors had several meetings with the acting headteacher and senior leaders about various aspects of the school's performance, including leaders' self-evaluation of the school and how well pupils are currently achieving.
- The inspectors met with the chair of governors and seven other governors. The lead inspector also met with a representative of the local authority. He spoke to a representative of the local Anglican diocese on the telephone.
- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher. An inspector observed an assembly.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work across the curriculum from all year groups. Work included that of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors met with several senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for mathematics, English, science, the early years and SEND provision.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to a group of them about school life. They also met pupils on the playground and observed behaviour at free times around the school.
- An inspector also held a meeting with a group of six staff members. Conversations were held with a number of staff members throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of the 92 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire, and the 54 written comments that were submitted. The lead inspector also considered two letters from parents and one from a member of staff. Responses from 31 staff and 152 pupils were also considered.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the inspection.
- An inspector visited the before-school club run by the school.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents including those recording the work of the governors and the single central record of checks on people who work at the school. They examined information on pupils' current progress and scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures.

## Inspection team

Bruce Waelend, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Amanda Gard	Ofsted Inspector
Kusum Trikha	Ofsted Inspector

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