

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Old Road, Writhlington, Radstock, Somerset BA3 3NG

Inspection dates

14–15 May 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	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have been too slow to remedy weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Leaders' plans lack precision and are not focused on the impact that actions are intended to have on pupils' outcomes.
- Governors' checks on some recording systems, including safeguarding, fall short of best practice.
- Leaders have not monitored carefully enough the provision for disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders have not sustained the previously good quality of teaching. Teachers do not consistently have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Some middle leaders are new to post. All have new roles and responsibilities. They do not have a full understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subject areas.
- Too few pupils make the progress they should to reach the higher standards by the end of Year 6, compared to nationally.
- In some year groups and subjects, teachers do not plan activities that are suitably matched for pupils who struggle with their learning.
- Reading materials are sometimes not matched to pupils' phonics knowledge in key stage 1. Too few pupils leave key stage 1 reading at the expected standard.
- Teaching in the Nursery does not extend children's learning and thinking effectively.
- Too many pupils are persistently absent from school and fall behind in their learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are confident, courteous and have good attitudes to learning. The range of activities offered captures their interest.
- Leaders work to ensure that teachers understand what pupils should know, do and understand in their year groups. Teachers' assessments are accurate.
- The teaching of phonics in the early years prepares children well for Year 1.
- The staff are very caring. As a result, pupils are very happy at the school and feel safe. Parents value this aspect of the school's work highly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to strengthen the impact of leadership and management by making sure that leaders and governors:
 - ensure that safeguarding records are well organised and managed and audit procedures are thorough
 - continue to develop the role of middle leaders so that they have the understanding and skills to support teachers so that pupils make good progress regardless of their starting points
 - ensure development plans contain measurable success criteria that enable leaders and governors to evaluate the impact of their actions on improving outcomes for pupils
 - make careful checks to consider the impact of their actions on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make the progress to reach the standards they should and are ready for the next stage of their education
 - sharpen the monitoring of pupils' attendance and respond swiftly so that more pupils attend school regularly
 - use the pupil premium funding effectively to overcome barriers to learning so that the attendance and attainment of disadvantaged pupils is good
 - ensure that governors take prompt action to secure a greater understanding of the school's effectiveness and check thoroughly so that they hold school leaders stringently to account.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - teachers, including in the early years, have high expectations of what pupils should be able to achieve and provide pupils with sufficient challenge
 - teachers make use of their accurate assessment information to set tasks that match pupils' needs well
 - teachers in key stage 1 match pupils' reading materials to pupils' phonics ability.

- Improve the quality of provision in the Nursery by ensuring that:
 - adults' interactions with children probe children's thinking and deepen their learning
 - the provision of equipment and resources in activities are appropriately matched to children's needs.

An external review of governance and use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders are not securing consistently good outcomes for pupils. Although senior leaders have increased the momentum of improvement in the last few weeks, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good.
- Senior leaders 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 because 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.
- Some middle leaders are new to their posts and others have revised roles and responsibilities. They do not yet have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subject areas. Some have an inflated view of pupils' progress and attainment. Supported by a local authority officer, senior leaders have provided new leaders with coaching, support and training. However, in common with the school's overall development plans, middle leaders' plans do not contain specific criteria to evaluate the success of leaders' actions. Consequently, middle leaders are unable to identify the specific actions needed to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has not been used effectively. Governors have not been monitoring the effectiveness of expenditure. 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. The recently appointed deputy headteacher has an accurate understanding of how funds should be spent. She is in the process of collecting information in readiness to strengthen this aspect of the school's work and devising a new plan.
- Governors have only recently become aware of the aims of the sport premium and how the government suggest it should be spent. They have not been monitoring the effectiveness of spending as they should do. However, leaders have made effective use of some of the funding to increase the range of sports and activities on offer to pupils.
- Leaders have taken effective action to ensure that teachers are clear about the expectations for the age range of pupils who they teach. Leaders have supported teachers to make accurate assessments of what pupils can and cannot do. Consequently, teachers have a greater understanding about what to do to support pupils' improved progress. However, leaders have further work to do to ensure that teachers use their assessments sufficiently well.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) knows the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. As a result, pupils with education, health and care plans (EHCPs) receive good support. Funding is used to provide support for pupils' social, emotional and academic development. However, too little is done to ensure that teaching routinely meets the needs of pupils with unidentified needs or those who struggle with their learning.
- Since the previous inspection, governors, senior leaders and staff have begun to work

more closely with the local authority. Teachers are enthusiastic about the professional development they have received. Staff morale is high. Staff are proud to work in the school and want the best for pupils.

- The headteacher has the full confidence of staff, pupils and parents. Pupils and parents speak positively about how approachable leaders are and they appreciate the improvements seen in communication. Most of parents who responded to Parent View would recommend the school to others.
- The wider curriculum beyond English and mathematics is well planned to provide pupils with a broad education. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to gain knowledge and skills in a range of subjects. Pupils who talked to inspectors could recall knowledge that they had gained in geography and French with great enthusiasm and understanding.
- Leaders' work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a notable strength of the school. Pupils are tolerant of others, regardless of differences, and they know about other faiths and cultures.

Governance of the school

- Governors' understanding of the school's performance is not precise enough. Consequently, their judgements about some aspects of the school's work, particularly safeguarding, teaching and the achievement of pupils, are not accurate.
- Governors do not know about the underlying trends for different groups of pupils or subjects. They have not asked sufficiently probing questions to get to the root causes of low attainment and progress for some pupil groups. In addition, they too readily accept information from senior leaders without challenge.
- Governors have not held senior leaders to account for the impact of the pupil premium funding on disadvantaged pupils' achievement and attendance.
- Although governors have some knowledge about the most urgent areas for improvement, they are limited in their ability to drive forward improvements because the school's improvement plans lack clear, measurable success criteria. This makes it difficult for governors to challenge and support leaders with sufficient rigour.
- Since the previous inspection, governors have worked with the local authority to review and improve their practice. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this work.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. However, there are some relative weaknesses in the school's work. Leaders have not ensured that safeguarding records are thorough. Procedures for recording vetting checks of new staff and governors fall short of best practice.
- Although pupils are safe, the safeguarding knowledge of some staff is not up to date, particularly that relating to recent developments in safeguarding. However, staff do act quickly as soon as they have concerns about a child's welfare.

- Governors do not monitor the school's safeguarding practice well enough. They have not identified that staff lack knowledge of the necessary range of safeguarding matters nor have they asked leaders to fill these gaps through training. Governors have not fully implemented the government's 'Prevent' duty or considered how it should be implemented within the school's community.
- When concerns arise, the designated leads for safeguarding are quick to work with external agencies to support pupils and their families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across year groups and subjects is inconsistent. Leaders are working hard to improve the quality of teaching. In some year groups, such as in the Reception Year and Years 2 and 6, strong teaching and learning are evident. However, these improvements are not sufficiently widespread.
- Teachers do not use information about what pupils already know and can do to ensure that pupils make good progress over time. In some year groups, pupils complete tasks that are too easy or too hard and, as a result, their progress slows.
- Not enough is done to strengthen the teaching of the most able pupils. Planned teaching does not consistently give enough consideration to deepening their thinking or making sure that they master their knowledge and apply their skills in different subjects. However, there are encouraging signs of improvement in some books, for example in Year 6.
- The teaching of phonics is largely effective. However, pupils' reading books in key stage 1 are not precisely matched to their phonics knowledge and this has a negative impact on their reading fluency and confidence. Leaders recognise this and are in the midst of purchasing new books.
- Teachers' focus on broadening pupils' vocabulary is enabling pupils' writing to become more sophisticated. As a result, more pupils are making better progress.
- A close focus on developing staff's understanding of mathematics is leading to improvements in the expectations of staff for pupils' learning across the school. In some classes, for example Year 6, mathematics teaching is now skilful, and teachers challenge pupils to explain how they solve complex problems. However, gaps in pupils' basic mathematical skills from previously weak teaching prevents some pupils from making good progress.
- In most cases, teaching assistants are deployed well in classes and are making a difference to the quality of pupils' learning.
- Teaching assistants ensure that pupils with SEND receive bespoke support which helps pupils to make good progress against their individual targets.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils

are proud of their school. They enjoy being part of the happy community at St Mary's.

- Pupils say they feel safe. Incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils know that should issues occur, these should be reported straight away so that adults can deal with any issues promptly.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe both in the school and in the local community. The curriculum helps pupils to understand how to be physically and mentally healthy. They know the importance of eating healthily and the need to be physically active.
- Regular reminders and a well-planned curriculum ensure that pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when they use the internet and a range of electronic devices.
- Pupils are encouraged to be caring, thoughtful individuals through the school's approach to social and emotional development.
- Pupils feel they can make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Those with school responsibilities take their roles seriously. For example, Year 6 pupils plan and lead a weekly Newsround assembly for pupils in key stage 2.

Behaviour

- Pupils work hard in their lessons and respond very quickly to adult instructions. They have good attitudes towards their learning.
- Pupils are clear about what is expected of them. They understand the behaviour systems in the school and the consequences of their actions. They behave well in and out of lessons.
- Pupils are polite to each other, accepting of any differences between each other, and they cooperate well in and out of class.
- Although pupils' overall attendance is in line with the national averages, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is much higher than the national average, and attendance is not improving. In recent weeks, leaders have been taking a stronger stance on this and are implementing more robust measures to raise the profile of the importance of attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In recent years, too few pupils have left the school at the end of Year 6 ready for the next stage of their education. However, the gap between the school's proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined in 2018 was closer to the national average than in previous years.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics over time has been particularly weak at the end of every key stage. However, there is evidence to suggest that due to subsequent improvements in teaching, the mathematics skills and understanding of current pupils are beginning to improve quickly. Nevertheless, this is not the case in every class.
- The inconsistent quality of teaching in the school holds some pupils back from achieving as well as they should. For example, some pupils in key stage 1 do not

receive enough help to make good progress from their lower starting points, particularly in reading and writing.

- As a result of leaders' recent actions, current pupils are making better progress in some year groups, but not in all year groups or across all subjects. The quality of teaching remains too variable, and as a result, pupils do not make consistently good progress.
- When pupils enter Year 1, a higher-than-average proportion are not ready for the demands of the Year 1 curriculum. Pupils' progress is not good enough across key stage 1 to enable them to catch up as well as other pupils nationally. However, work in books showed some encouraging signs that current Year 2 pupils are catching up. More are working at the standards expected for their age in reading and writing in particular.
- Over time, by the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6, too few pupils make good progress to reach the high standards they are capable of. Work for the most able pupils often lacks the challenge they need to reach their potential. However, work in books shows that improved strategies for the teaching of mathematics in recent months are leading to more pupils being challenged to achieve the expected and higher standards.
- Pupils with SEND who have EHCPs are making good progress towards their individual targets across most year groups. Their physical, personal and emotional support helps these pupils to have a positive attitude towards their academic learning.
- For the first time, in 2018 the proportion of children reaching the standard expected in the phonics screening check in Year 1 was higher than the national average. Current pupils use and apply their phonics knowledge to decipher unfamiliar words.
- Current pupils are learning much more successfully in reading, writing and mathematics compared to previous years. Pupils in Reception and Years 2 and 6 are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They are developing the self-confidence and enjoyment of learning needed to help them this year and in the future.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- In Nursery, some planned activities involve limited opportunities for children to use their existing skills and knowledge and to learn well. This results in some activities being of low interest and of limited value to children's development. Activities in Reception are much better suited to children's needs and abilities. However, the most able children are sometimes not challenged to achieve their best, particularly in writing.
- Although there have been some improvements in adult interactions with children in the Nursery, opportunities to promote children's speaking skills or to deepen their learning are lost.
- Staff-led activities, particularly in Reception, are effective in helping children to learn and to acquire the important early knowledge and skills for reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children in Reception learn to form letters correctly and use capital letters and full stops. They also use their early phonics knowledge to spell and read simple words accurately.
- Children in both the Nursery and Reception classes learn to cooperate with each other.

They follow routines and instructions. For example, they tidy up when asked and sit to form a circle quickly and quietly. Children listen and respond well to the adults in the classrooms and move between activities sensibly and purposefully.

- Assessment procedures are consistent and they accurately reflect children's early development and acquisition of knowledge and skills. Staff observe children as they play, investigate and explore. They make a note about how well children are developing across all areas of learning. This procedure is firmly established in the Reception class, but is in its infancy in the Nursery. Consequently, over time, too few children join the Reception class ready for the next stage in their education.
- Leaders have increased parental involvement in the school. Many more parents now share books with their children. All children take home books to share with family members.
- Leaders have put in place safeguarding arrangements that are specific to the youngest children, such as intimate care and toileting procedures. All the early years welfare requirements are met.
- The teaching of phonics in Reception is skilful and children learn to read successfully.
- Senior leaders understand where the strengths and weaknesses are in the early years. They have responded to the next steps suggested in the previous inspection to improve the quality of provision in the Nursery. Staff have benefited from training and there are improvements to the indoor and outdoor learning environments.

School details

Unique reference number	109212
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset Council
Inspection number	10088246

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frances Butt
Headteacher	Cathie Lampert
Telephone number	01761 434548
Website	www.stmaryswrithlington.co.uk
Email address	stmaryswrithlington_pri@bathnes.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 July 2018

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It has provision for two-year-olds as part of the Nursery. The school comprises of a Nursery and seven single year group classes.
- The school was inspected in July 2018. This inspection outlined some key areas for leaders to address. It did not change the school's overall effectiveness grade.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is larger than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. Most visits to classes were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, middle leaders, the deputy headteacher, members of the governing body and a local authority officer. The lead inspector also conducted two telephone calls with local authority officers.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information on the school's self-evaluation and development plan; minutes of meetings; records relating to the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment and records associated with behaviour and safety.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work in books with other leaders to establish the current quality of work in books.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read from Years 1, 2, 3 and 6.
- The inspectors took account of parental views through meeting with parents and as a result of scrutiny of the 40 responses to the online Parent View survey and free-text.
- The inspectors gained the views of pupils throughout the inspection, including discussions at breaktimes.

Inspection team

Tracy Hannon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lizzy Meadows

Ofsted Inspector

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