

Beaminster St Mary's Academy

Clay Lane, Beaminster, Dorset DT8 3BY

Inspection dates

21–22 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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Due to turbulence in staffing, leaders' actions to improve teaching have not been sustained over time.
- Progress across key stage 2 has been inconsistent due to weaknesses in teaching in some areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders' checks on pupils' progress are not precise enough. This hinders their efforts to improve the quality of teaching.
- Teachers do not yet have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, the most able pupils are not making the progress they should be making.
- Pupils in the mixed-age classes are often given the same tasks. The work is too easy for the most able pupils and too hard for the least able.
- Leaders have not ensured that children in the early years experience a broad and balanced curriculum that builds on and extends their learning.
- The effectiveness of middle leadership is too inconsistent. This leads to wide variation in the progress pupils make in different areas.
- The quality of pupils' writing across the school is not high enough. A large proportion of pupils are not writing at the standard they should be.

The school has the following strengths

- The interim headteachers have developed an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- A recent focus on reading has resulted in pupils being more confident readers. They are now reading regularly at home and at school.
- Improved teaching in mathematics has enabled many pupils to meet age-related expectations.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the changes made by the interim headteachers.
- Pupils behave well around the school and are developing more positive attitudes to their learning.
- Leaders have taken action to ensure that pupils come to school regularly. Attendance is now in line with the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure that the quality of teaching and learning across the school is good
 - ensuring that teachers plan work for pupils that matches their ability
 - developing the ability of middle leaders to raise standards in their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring that an effective assessment system is in place so that the progress of pupils can be accurately checked.
- Raise the standard of writing across the school so that a higher proportion of pupils reach at least expected standards by:
 - embedding recent initiatives to raise the quality of teaching further so that pupils know how to improve their writing
 - ensuring that teachers promote good-quality writing across the curriculum
 - ensuring that pupils' spelling skills are secure
 - having high expectations of presentation for all the writing that children produce.
- Improve the early years provision by:
 - giving children access to a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes high-quality learning
 - ensuring that children are able to write legibly and use their knowledge of phonics accurately.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Standards have not improved since the last inspection. The school has experienced a high turnover of teachers in recent years. Leaders have had difficulty in recruiting high-quality replacements.
- Leaders have not taken decisive enough action to improve the quality of teaching during a period of instability. This has led to a decline in pupils' achievement.
- Following a review of school effectiveness requested by governors, the multi-academy trust (MAT) brought in two experienced leaders to cover the absence of the headteacher. The interim headteachers have taken steps to strengthen teaching and learning. They recruited teachers and provided effective support for staff. This has resulted in improvements in behaviour and in pupils' attitudes to learning. Pupils say that they can now get on with their learning.
- The interim headteachers have identified the school's strengths and weaknesses accurately. They have prioritised improvements in mathematics and reading and there is now leadership capacity to raise standards in these areas more rapidly.
- The MAT has worked with the school to strengthen the leadership of mathematics. More consistent practice is now evident across the school. Most pupils are now achieving the expectations for their age.
- Leaders have not ensured that the information recorded on the school's assessment and tracking system is accurate. On checking teachers' assessments, leaders noticed that they were too high compared to the evidence in pupils' books.
- Leaders are now providing guidance and support to enable the teaching of reading to be improved. The new assessment system for reading shows that some pupils made rapid progress with reading over three months.
- Middle leadership is not strong enough across the school. Actions taken to improve the quality of teaching in reading and writing in the past have not had the expected impact. New leadership in mathematics and English is beginning to improve pupils' progress. However, leadership of science and geography is not as effective and so standards in these subjects are still not high enough.
- Leaders have made good use of pupil premium funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are able to participate fully in lessons. Pupils explained how the support they receive helps them to settle more quickly to their learning. It is too early to tell if other strategies to increase these pupils' progress in reading and mathematics are having an impact. However, pupils do say the extra support in reading has made them more confident.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has not been effective in the past. Parents of pupils with SEND voiced concerns that the school was not meeting their children's needs. Leaders have now ensured that the specific support needed is in place. Work in books shows that pupils with SEND are making better progress.
- Leaders recognise that the curriculum needs improving as the topics covered do not

provide continuity from one year to the next. Pupils say that, at times, science is too easy and, at other times, too difficult. The school has already started to review what is taught.

- The physical education and sport funding is used to provide opportunities for pupils to experience a wide range of physical activities. These include tennis, tag rugby, archery and basketball, as well as the more traditional sports. Pupils also participate in competitive sports. For example, during the inspection, the Year 6 team came third in a local cricket tournament.
- Parents have confidence in the current leadership. They spoke very positively about the improvements in behaviour and communication with the school. Some parents expressed concerns regarding the lack of clarity about the future.

Governance of the school

- In the past, governors did not challenge school leaders firmly enough. The appointment of a new chair of the governing body last year helped the governors to assess that the school was not improving rapidly enough. Governors sought additional support from the MAT. Governors now have a secure understanding of how well the school is doing.
- The governing body monitors the use of additional funding for pupils with SEND. The governor responsible for pupils with SEND comes in to school on a regular basis to meet with the appropriate headteacher. As a result, governors are aware of the effectiveness of additional support that is being given to pupils with SEND.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders make appropriate checks on the suitability of new staff when they are appointed. The safeguarding governor regularly checks on the school's processes. Consequently, the school's procedures for ensuring pupils' well-being are kept up to date.
- Staff have regular safeguarding training. Leaders signpost new staff to online training and check up to see that they have completed and understood it. Staff can talk about what they had learned from training, which includes coverage of the 'Prevent' duty programme.
- The school's designated safeguarding leaders work well with outside agencies to ensure that pupils at risk of harm are protected. If staff think that a pupil continues to be at risk, they take appropriate steps to secure the pupil's safety.
- The school ensures that pupils are taught about online safety. Pupils know how to stay safe online.
- Parents who completed Parent View during the inspection indicated they had no concerns about their children's safety in school. Pupils said that they felt safe in school. They are confident that they can go to any adult if they have any worries or concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve across the range of subjects. As a result, many pupils are not working at the standards appropriate for their age, particularly in reading and writing.
- Pupils are taught mainly in mixed-age classes. Often, the same work is set for all pupils. This means that younger or lower-ability pupils find the work too difficult and the most able are not challenged sufficiently.
- Teachers do not give pupils sufficient guidance about how to improve the quality of writing so that it engages the reader more effectively. Older pupils are not applying their knowledge of grammatical structure and features such as adjectives and adverbs which make the writing more interesting.
- Teachers are not doing enough to ensure that pupils are able to spell accurately. There are now opportunities for pupils to edit their writing but the impact is limited by pupils' inconsistent knowledge of phonics. Incorrect spelling of mathematical and scientific vocabulary is not consistently picked up by teachers and therefore pupils sometimes repeat their mistakes.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving in the school. Teachers ensure that pupils have a secure understanding before moving on by asking them to prove that they understand. As a result, pupils are making good progress and are able to apply their skills in different contexts. In Year 3, pupils used mental calculation to add two-digit numbers. In Year 6, pupils could apply their knowledge of rounding rapidly and accurately in a strategy game.
- In mathematics lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to extend pupils' understanding and address misconceptions. Additional support ensures that disadvantaged pupils have a good understanding of what is being taught. They explained that this support, as well as the visual displays in the classroom, helps them.
- Teaching across the curriculum is not strong enough. The most able pupils are not being challenged in science and geography. Pupils record the basic facts they have learned. There are few opportunities to deepen their learning. In some pupils' work, there is evidence of misconceptions about what they have learned.
- Leaders' actions to promote reading are having an impact. Teachers encourage pupils to read at home. Staff make time to hear pupils read if they were not able to read at home. Parents said that teachers check up every day to see if their child had read. One parent said that this was encouraging her child to read every day at home.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, which has resulted in behaviour improving, particularly in upper key stage 2.

- Pupils enjoy learning. Some pupils said they enjoyed reading more because of the extra support they are getting.
- Teachers encourage pupils to take pride in their work by presenting it well. This is evident in their writing and mathematics books but less so in topic books.
- Pupils say that bullying rarely happens. They are confident that it is dealt with effectively by staff if it does happen. When pupils do fall out, adults help them to share their feelings with each other, which enables them to get on.
- Pupils gain an understanding of British values through consideration of the school's values during assemblies and in follow-up work in class. Leaders have encouraged pupils to take on a range of responsibilities around the school. Pupils talk positively about how they help other children in clubs or pick up litter at breaktimes. When asked about their experience of joining the school, new pupils remarked on how friendly and welcoming other pupils were. In class, pupils make sure that nobody is excluded. Staff ensure that pupils who follow the school's values are praised by having their name included in the 'Well Done' book.
- Pupils' understanding of other cultures is limited. They are not able to remember what they have been taught in previous years. This limits their capacity to understand the views and beliefs of others.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders recognised that behaviour was not being managed effectively. The interim headteachers have ensured that the school's behaviour policy is followed consistently and they have revised the school's reward system. Pupils say that sanctions are now more consistent. Parents commented that pupils who behave well all the time are now recognised and rewarded.
- Teachers have established good relationships with pupils and developed effective ways of managing behaviour. As a result, there is no disruption to pupils' learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is managed well around the school. This is due to the vigilance and skill of the staff. Pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly way as they know what is expected of them. Parents say that behaviour has been improving since the arrival of the interim headteachers.
- Although teachers record behaviour incidents, leaders do not analyse this information closely enough. This limits their ability to identify patterns or trends.
- Current figures show an improvement in attendance and a reduction in persistent absence. The rate of pupils' attendance is in line with the national average. During the two-day inspection, all the pupils were in school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Many pupils are not achieving the standards they are capable of across the curriculum. This is particularly the case for writing. There are, however, indications from books that

recent improvements in teaching are helping pupils to make better progress in mathematics.

- The teaching of basic skills in phonics has enabled the vast majority of pupils to achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. However, as pupils move through the school, their understanding of phonics is not securely embedded. As a result, pupils' writing contains many basic spelling errors.
- Achievement at the end of Year 6 has been inconsistent over the past three years.
- Attainment in science at the end of key stage 2 has been below average for the last three years.
- Leaders have judged that specific support for pupils with SEND is helping them make more rapid progress. Work in books and evidence of reading progress support this. Even so, these pupils have not yet made good progress from their starting points.
- Weaker readers find the books they are given difficult to read due to their insecure knowledge of phonics. They also do not have effective strategies for reading longer words. At times, they do not know the meaning of some of these words.
- In recent years, disadvantaged pupils have made less progress across key stage 2 than other pupils. Last year, their progress in reading was well below average. This has led to these pupils finishing Year 6 with lower attainment than other pupils nationally.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The leadership of early years requires improvement.
- Leaders have not ensured that the activities on offer are consistently appropriate for the age and stage of the children. At times, Reception children are given the same work as the Year 1 pupils. Staff do not consistently intervene to ensure that children are engaged in their learning. As a result, some pupils are not involved in purposeful activities that develop their understanding.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of provision. They have used this knowledge to target particular areas to improve. For example, earlier this year, changes were made to the outside learning environment to provide more interesting learning activities for children. However, this area is still not being used effectively by staff to extend children's learning.
- The teaching of phonics and writing skills is weak. Children's handwriting is not improving rapidly enough. Few of the children form letters consistently and accurately. This makes their writing hard to read. Children's weak spelling makes their writing difficult to understand.
- Children engage well in the activities provided and persevere to finish a task. For example, one child very carefully threaded pipe cleaners to make whiskers for a jaguar mask.
- Leaders ensure that communication with parents is effective. Consequently, parents let the school know about important milestones that happen at home. These are celebrated in the classroom.
- The school organises transition events with the on-site playgroup to ensure that

children settle in well. Last year, parents had the opportunity to come in to school once their children had settled to find out what they were learning.

School details

Unique reference number	140560
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10088326

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust
Chair	Paul Nugent
Headteacher	Teri Goodinson
Telephone number	01308 862 201
Website	www.stmarysbeaminster.dorset.sch.uk/
Email address	office@beaminsterstmarys.dsat.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 January 2017

Information about this school

- There have been a number of changes to senior leadership since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher left the school in August 2018 and has not been replaced. Currently, the headteacher is absent. Two interim headteachers took up a shared post in November 2018.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by an education, health and care plan is below the national average.

- Most pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. The majority of classes are across two key stages.
- The proportion of boys and girls in each cohort varies considerably.
- The school operates a breakfast club for its pupils.
- The school is designated as a Church of England primary school. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in June 2015.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning across a range of subjects and year groups. Some of these were joint observations with senior leaders in the school.
- The inspector looked at the quality of pupils' work during lessons and carried out a focused analysis of work in books.
- The inspector held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders, designated safeguarding leads, staff, governors from the local governing board and a member of the trust board, as well as representatives from the MAT.
- The inspector spoke to the chief executive officer of the MAT by telephone.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including information available on the school's website and records relating to attendance. Information on governance, including minutes of governing body meetings, was examined. The school's self-evaluation summary, school development plan, the MAT's monitoring and action plans and supporting evidence were scrutinised.
- The inspector spoke with parents during the inspection and considered the responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent survey, including 26 free-text comments.
- The inspector took into account the views of the 19 staff who responded to the staff survey and the 47 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and spoke with pupils in lessons and around the school. She also met formally with groups of pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, before school, around the school, during breakfast club and during breaktimes.

Inspection team

Susan Watts, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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