

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School

Lansdown View, Timsbury, Bath, Somerset BA2 0JR

Inspection dates: 24–25 September 2019

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Over some time, leaders have not provided pupils at the school with a good enough education. Leaders have not planned the curriculum well enough or ensured it is implemented effectively. Pupils do not learn enough in different subjects, including early reading. Too few pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education as they move through the school.

Pupils do not concentrate as well as they should in lessons and learning time is lost as a result. Leaders' expectations of behaviour are not consistently high. Staff do not make sure that pupils move sensibly around the school.

Pupils generally enjoy their lunchtimes and play well together. However, they would benefit from new play equipment, which is due to be installed in October. The school's shared values give pupils a sense of belonging. Pupils feel safe. They attend well and most enjoy school. Pupils say that bullying is rare, and if it does happen staff sort this out straight away. Pupils who need extra help, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), get the emotional support they need so they are ready to learn.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have been much too slow to improve the school. They have not taken sufficient notice of valuable advice. They have introduced some changes but not completed or sustained them. Leaders have not challenged staff well enough to ensure that the quality of education is good. As a result, pupils do not receive a good quality of education. Changes to teaching and leadership roles have hindered the pace of improvement. Some subject leaders are new and therefore not yet sufficiently clear about their roles. This has slowed the pace of change further. Some key improvement work is only just beginning to focus on weaker areas, such as English. Leaders remain too dependent on external support to bring about improvement.

The headteacher has devised new curriculum policies and guidance for what is to be taught and understood in a range of foundation subjects and English. These plans are not yet approved by governors. Staff training to ensure teachers follow these plans is just starting. Planned sequences of learning, in subjects such as geography, do not consistently build on what pupils already know. Pupils' work can be too easy or too hard.

The school's approach to teaching early reading and phonics is not good enough. Pupils who struggle to learn to read in Years 1 and 2 do not have books matched to the letters and sounds they know. Leaders have recently introduced a new approach to teaching phonics in Years 1 and 2. The phonics leader is checking where pupils have gaps in their knowledge. She is putting plans in place to help these pupils to catch up. However, it is too soon for this to have made a difference.

Over time, pupils' achievement has not been good enough. Last year, pupils did much better in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6. However, in the past, writing was not taught well in Years 1 and 2. As a result, when these pupils entered Years 3 and 4, they needed to catch up. Leaders have been successful in improving mathematics. The curriculum is now better sequenced and so, increasingly, pupils learn well. However, some younger pupils do not do as well as they should.

Pupils with SEND receive support to help their needs. However, weaknesses in the curriculum do not enable some younger pupils to build their learning well over time.

In the early years, most children are settling well. However, leaders' expectations for children's learning are too low. Leaders are implementing training to ensure that staff in Reception secure the right knowledge to deliver the school's phonics programme.

Pupils take their responsibilities seriously. They enjoy enterprising activities such as running the school's healthy fruit shop. Pupils learn about different religions and cultures, and the world. Opportunities such as 'forest school', attending theatre visits, and meeting additional visitors enrich pupils' experiences beyond the classroom.

The interim governing board (IGB) has some grasp of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. Governors have spent some time dealing with parents' concerns about a lack of communication from the school. They have appropriate skills and are working closely with the local authority to bring about changes. However, the IGB has not always had the information that it needs to challenge leaders effectively about the school's work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils can talk about how to keep safe and they know who to go to if they have concerns. Staff checks are fit for purpose and in line with current legislation. Leaders who are responsible for safeguarding make timely referrals and work closely with external agencies to minimise pupils' risk of harm.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The governing body resigned in November 2018. An IGB is now in place. Much of the IGB's time has been spent responding to parental concerns. The IGB has not always had the information that it needs to challenge leaders effectively to improve the school. Leaders should ensure that the IGB has the information it needs to hold them to account so that the school's 'overall effectiveness' improves

rapidly.

- Leadership roles change regularly due to staff turnover. Leaders do not ensure that previous improvements are secure before they move on to the next aspect for improvement. Consequently, improvements are not sustained over time. Leaders must ensure that improvements are implemented effectively and embedded. While some subject leaders are developing their roles, others have not started, or their work is being implemented too slowly. The headteacher must ensure that leaders at all levels receive the professional development they need to bring about school-wide improvement.
- Pupils in key stage 1 do not achieve well enough in writing. The curriculum does not build on what children can do at the end of Reception. Leaders need to review the curriculum for writing to ensure that pupils' learning builds effectively over time.
- The school's approach to teaching early reading and phonics so that pupils can read and spell accurately is not good enough. This means that pupils enter key stage 2 with weaknesses in their spelling. Leaders must now make sure that all staff have the skills and knowledge to teach early reading well. Work to improve the reading curriculum in key stage 2 also needs more time to secure.
- Staff are not clear enough about what needs to be taught and when in foundation subjects, such as geography. Governors have not yet approved the new plans. Leaders should ensure that teachers know what pupils are expected to learn in each subject and sequence learning effectively to achieve this.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use Ofsted Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further guidance on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can complain to Ofsted.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Unique reference number | 109208 |
| Local authority | Bath and North East Somerset Council |
| Inspection number | 10115774 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 164 |
| Appropriate authority | Local authority |
| Chair of governing body | Ruth Balch and Claire Hudson (co-chairs) |
| Headteacher | Alice Brown |
| Website | stmarystimsbury.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 8 – 9 November 2017 |

Information about this school

- The school has had three consecutive judgements of ‘requires improvement’ since 2013. The same headteacher has been in post throughout this period. In October 2018, a section 8 monitoring visit found that the school was not taking effective action for the school to become good.
- The full governing body resigned in November 2018. There is an IGB in place. There are co-chairs of governors.
- The substantive deputy headteacher has recently returned from planned extended absence. There is an assistant headteacher who is class-based. There is also a part-time teacher who leads phonics and the early years. She does not have a class responsibility.
- In addition, there is a deputy headteacher who is boosting leadership capacity. He took up his role three weeks ago.
- St Mary’s is a slightly smaller than average primary school. It has one class for each year group. There are seven classes in total.
- The school has received extensive leadership and subject support from a range of sources. This includes support from national leaders of education, national leaders of governance, and the Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership. The school

has received subject support and leadership support.

- The local authority (LA) has funded the external support. Meetings have also taken place with school leaders, those responsible for governance, and the LA, to review the impact of the external support.
- There have been considerable staffing changes since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the substantive deputy headteacher, and assistant headteacher. An inspector met with other leaders, including those responsible for art, phonics and early years. Inspectors also met with class teachers and talked to support staff during the inspection to gather their views.
- An inspector held meetings with a deputy headteacher who is seconded to the school. An inspector held a conversation with two representatives from the local authority. An inspector also met with five members of the IGB.
- Inspectors visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their experience of school.
- Inspectors also talked to and observed pupils at social times.
- The inspection concentrated on reading, mathematics, geography and art. Inspectors also talked to pupils and staff about other areas of the curriculum.
- The school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals to the local authority were reviewed. We spoke to staff about how they keep pupils safe. We also asked pupils how they keep themselves safe and what to do if they have concerns.
- One inspector talked to parents at the beginning of each day of the inspection. Inspectors considered 19 responses from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, along with 13 free text responses. Inspectors also reviewed the Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to the pupils' online survey.

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Nicola Berry

Ofsted Inspector

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