

Inspection of St Monica Primary School

Bay Road, Sholing, Southampton, Hampshire SO19 8EZ

Inspection dates:

8–9 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils really like their school. They are curious and keen to learn. However, many realise the work is too easy or too hard for them. Staff expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been high enough. Sequences of lessons are poorly planned. The quality of teaching, although improving, is too inconsistent. Because of this, pupils do not learn as much as they should. The new interim headteacher, along with her leadership team, is changing this rapidly.

Over the last year or so, behaviour deteriorated. This term, it has really improved. However, at times, the behaviour of some pupils still disrupts learning. Most pupils now understand what is expected of them and try hard in lessons. Around school, pupils are polite and friendly. Generally, they get along well together. If they do fall out with each other, staff help them to sort it out. If bullying happens, then staff deal with it well. Pupils say they feel safe at school and learn how to stay safe, for example through assemblies.

Pupils enjoy a variety of engaging clubs, including football, dodgeball, drama and dance. They talk excitedly about the adventurous activities they have participated in, such as abseiling and kayaking.

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

Teachers deliver lessons without being fully aware of what pupils have learned before. Pupils do not build their knowledge in a progressive way. This term, leaders have introduced a new curriculum to the school. The teaching of mathematics and writing have improved greatly. This new curriculum is not planned effectively across all subjects, however. In the past, staff have received very little relevant training to help them to teach pupils well. Recent training is now having a clear impact on pupils' work in mathematics and writing.

Leaders have not prioritised teaching pupils to read. There is no consistent approach. Too many staff lack the skills needed to teach reading well. Nevertheless, pupils enjoy reading and choose to read often. Pupils desperately tried to find books to read to inspectors. However, many books on offer are badly matched to pupils' reading levels. This hinders their progress. Too few staff promote pupils' love of reading effectively. Some staff read pupils exciting, interesting stories but this is too infrequent. Staff do not accurately identify pupils who fall behind with their reading. These pupils progress through the school unable to access their learning fully.

Too many pupils have underachieved. Too few pupils leave well prepared for secondary school. Last year, staff failed to ensure that pupils in Year 2 reached the levels they were capable of. This year, there is rightly a strong focus on ensuring that these pupils catch up quickly.

Behaviour has recently improved dramatically. Staff have clearer, higher expectations. New effective systems work well for the majority of pupils. However,

not all staff put these approaches into practice consistently well.

Staff successfully teach pupils to be thoughtful and accept everyone's differences. Pupils try hard to abide by the St Monica '6 Cs' (consistency, consideration, commitment, cooperation, courtesy and care). They appreciate and understand their responsibilities. For example, 'travel trackers' encourage walking to school to help reduce pollution. Pupils would benefit more if personal, social and health education was carefully planned.

Many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not learn well. Staff have not accurately identified pupils' needs. Many pupils are wrongly expected to learn without extra support. The new, highly skilled special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is changing this swiftly.

The new interim headteacher and senior leader are making necessary, rapid improvements. Leaders across the school now have an excellent understanding of what needs to improve and the skills to achieve this. They rightly act with urgency. Governors have learned from mistakes that allowed standards to decline. The newly introduced celebration and singing assemblies reflect the newfound positivity of staff.

Children in the early years do not get off to the start they deserve. Caring adults look after them well. Some adults do not have the skills needed to support children's learning effectively. The curriculum lacks cohesion and planning. Children have too few opportunities to practise their early reading and writing skills. Staff do not assess children accurately or quickly enough to identify those who are falling behind. As a result, children who need extra help do not receive it. The new early years leader is making the much-needed improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive lots of relevant training which provides them with the knowledge they need to be vigilant in keeping pupils safe. Leaders have recently streamlined systems for recording concerns. Any concerns are noted and dealt with quickly. There is strong communication throughout the school. Leaders have developed excellent relationships and communication with external agencies. Leaders oversee cases effectively and provide the required support as quickly as possible.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Learning (in all subjects) is not yet cohesively planned. Leaders need to ensure that the content of all subjects is carefully sequenced so that learning builds on pupils' prior knowledge. To do this, leaders need to make sure that staff consistently have the knowledge and skills necessary to teach the curriculum effectively and to accurately identify pupils who are falling behind. This includes the early years foundation stage curriculum.
- Leaders need to ensure that reading across the school is prioritised and improved so that all pupils can access their learning fully. Currently, books do not match pupils' reading levels, and the teaching of phonics is inconsistent and often weak. Leaders must improve the availability of appropriate reading books across the school and ensure that staff have strong skills in phonics teaching.
- Most pupils behave well. For some pupils who need extra help managing their behaviour, effective systems are not yet in place. Consequently, at times, poor behaviour hinders the learning of other pupils. Leaders should ensure that the recent improvements seen in behaviour become consistent across the school and that staff apply agreed approaches to managing pupils' behaviour equally well.
- Many pupils with SEND do not have suitable support with their learning. As a result, their progress is hindered. Recently, the new SENCo has ensured that vital assessments have led to some pupils now being appropriately supported. Leaders need to make sure that this effective practice becomes consistent for all pupils with SEND.

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

Unique reference number	116106
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10088125
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	596
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Helen Sanger
Headteacher	Nicky Cunningham (interim headteacher)
Website	www.stmonicaprimary.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	28–29 March 2017

Information about this school

- The school is currently led by an interim headteacher who has been brought in by the local authority. An interim senior leader in charge of teaching and learning has also joined the school. These leaders joined in September 2019.
- From January 2019 to July 2019, the local authority was providing regular support to school leaders as a result of a sharp decline in standards across the school. This included intensive support during the last few weeks of the summer term, when there were temporarily no permanent senior leaders in the school.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a high turnover of staff and prolonged periods of staff illness.
- The new chair of the governing body had been in post for 10 days before this inspection.
- The infant and junior sites now have a site-specific senior leader who is responsible for the day-to-day running of the site.

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.

- We met with the interim headteacher, the interim senior leader responsible for teaching and learning, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher. We also met with leaders responsible for the early years foundation stage and SEND. We spoke with a school improvement officer from the local authority and met with the director of education for Southampton.
- In order to look at safeguarding, we spoke to pupils, staff, parents, carers and governors. We also looked at a range of records and documentation, including the school's single central record, which contains details of recruitment checks.
- Subjects considered closely as part of this inspection were reading, mathematics, design and technology, science and history. In each subject, we had discussions with leaders and teachers, conducted lesson visits, talked to pupils about what they had learned and looked at pupils' work.
- We spoke to a wide range of staff about pupils' behaviour and observed pupils in the playground and lunch hall.
- We spoke to pupils to hear their views of their school. Inspectors met with parents and spoke to parents on the telephone. We considered 132 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including 132 free-text responses. We also considered the views of 30 staff who completed the Ofsted staff survey.

Inspection team

Maxine McDonald-Taylor, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Felix Rayner	Ofsted Inspector
Rachel Goplen	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Francis	Ofsted Inspector

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