

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Southam

Daventry Road, Southam, CV47 1PS

Inspection dates

20–21 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher provides very effective leadership. She has successfully established a united staff team that is fully committed to continued improvement.
- With the support of an effective governing body, leaders have improved the quality of teaching. As a result pupils' progress and achievement are now good.
- Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are above average.
- The highly effective marking of pupils' work is underpinning the rise in standards.
- As a result of good provision, children of all abilities settle quickly in the early years and make good progress.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is particularly good. They develop a good understanding of racial, religious and cultural diversity in modern Britain.
- Pupils enjoy school and attendance is above average. Their good behaviour and attitudes contribute much to the strong sense of community in the school.
- Sensitively planned work for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, together with very effective support by skilled teaching assistants, ensure that they make good progress.
- Parents and carers are very satisfied with the school and the progress their children are making.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) in Key Stage 1 is not as good as in other age groups. Teachers do not always use teaching assistants effectively to support pupils in phonics groups.
- Teachers do not place enough emphasis on improving basic literacy and presentational skills in pupils' writing in Key Stage 1.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in eight lessons. All lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector observed the breakfast and after-school clubs, and made a number of short visits to classrooms.
- Pupils were observed at break and lunchtimes.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, staff, pupils, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Groups of pupils of different ages were heard reading.
- The inspector took account of 18 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and 11 responses to the staff questionnaire. The views of parents and carers delivering their children to school at the start of the day were also considered.
- The inspector looked at the school's policies, teachers' plans, samples of pupils' work, school improvement planning and records on behaviour and safety. Information on individual pupils' progress and teachers' performance, and records of meetings held by the governing body, were also looked at.

Inspection team

Kenneth Thomas, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, at about 12%, is broadly average. A small number have statements of special educational needs.
- About 15% of the pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care. This is below the national average.
- Children in the early years attend the Nursery for either morning or afternoon sessions, and then start attending school full-time in the Reception Year.
- Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes: Nursery and Reception; Years 1 and 2; Years 3 and 4; and Years 5 and 6.
- There were too few pupils in Year 6 in 2014 to judge if the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school provides daily breakfast and after-school clubs for pupils.
- The school has experienced staff and leadership changes over the last two years. Three new teachers have joined since September 2012 and a new deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2014.
- The headteacher joined the school as acting headteacher in April 2012 and was appointed permanent headteacher in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching of phonics in Key Stage 1 by ensuring that:
 - all adults have the skills needed to consolidate and extend the progress made in the early years
 - teachers make full use of the support available from teaching assistants.
- Raise standards in writing at the end of Key Stage 1 by increasing the focus on basic literacy and presentational skills in different types of writing.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The very effective headteacher has driven the school forward since the last inspection. She is fully supported by her deputy and other staff with leadership roles. There is an overwhelming determination by staff and governors to continue to improve teaching, learning and pupils' achievement.
- Key to the school's improvement have been stabilising staffing and developing the roles and effectiveness of staff with leadership responsibilities. Teaching is better, standards are rising and behaviour has improved. Staff morale is high and all work together as an effective team. This demonstrates that the school has the capacity for further improvement. Parents spoken to during the inspection commented favourably on the positive changes and the direction the school is now taking.
- Through regular checks on pupils' progress, observations of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' work, senior staff accurately identify what needs to improve. As a result they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are able to take prompt action to make further improvements. They are fully aware that further training is needed to ensure consistency in the teaching of phonics in Key Stage 1.
- Leaders recognise that decisions on staff pay and promotion must be justified by the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. They have taken decisive action to tackle weaknesses in teaching. As a result, inadequate teaching has been eradicated. Teachers confirm that they are well supported through training to improve their skills and achieve their targets.
- The school uses assessment information well to track the progress of the pupils. Leaders hold regular pupils' progress meetings with class teachers and leaders to identify pupils who need extra help. Following the removal of National Curriculum levels, the school is collaborating with other local schools to implement a common approach to assessment.
- Provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is managed well. Parents appreciate that the good support their children receive enables them to experience all the learning opportunities available. This reflects the school's commitment to equality of opportunity and the successful elimination of discrimination.
- The curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage of education and is well planned to support learning and raise achievement. It places an appropriate emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills, and is enhanced by the use of educational visits and visitors into school. The curriculum is in the process of being developed to provide more meaningful links between subjects.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. Mutual respect and the celebration of diversity are central to the ethos of the school. Pupils are taught to understand and respect people from different faiths and cultures, and are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Through participation in elections, for example to the school council, they develop an understanding of representative democracy.
- The pupil premium is used effectively to provide additional support for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that any attainment gaps between these and other pupils are closed. The primary school sports funding is being used well, for example to subscribe to the local sports partnership and increase the range of sports clubs and activities offered to pupils. Pupils say that they enjoy their sports sessions and being involved in competitions.
- The local authority has provided effective help for the school since the last inspection. For example, through training and working alongside staff, it has contributed to the improvement in the early years.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides the school with considerable expertise and a high level of support. All its members are very committed to the school's ongoing success. Governors have an accurate picture of

how well the school is doing and know how its performance compares with that of other schools. Training is up to date and governors hold the school to account and challenge school leaders about areas for improvement. They understand that staff pay rises and promotion must be linked to pupils' progress.

- Financial management is secure and governors ensure that pupil premium funding is used for the intended purposes.
- Governors fully meet their duties, including those related to safeguarding. They make sure the school's arrangements for child protection and pupils' safeguarding are very effective and meet all current requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They understand the school's expectations of behaviour and the vast majority conform willingly to the requests of teachers. They are eager to learn and work well with each other in lessons.
- Pupils are proud of their school and behave well as they move around at break and lunchtimes. Pupils and parents who spoke to the inspector said that behaviour is typically good in school. Exclusion is used only as a last resort and is rare.
- Pupils are keen to contribute to the school community and take their responsibilities as school councillors, house captains and play leaders very seriously.
- Pupils who take part in the well-run breakfast and after-school clubs enjoy the range of activities provided. Behaviour is good in these clubs. They are well supervised and contribute well to the good quality of care and support the school provides.
- Attendance is above average. Pupils' attitudes to learning are usually good, but occasionally in phonics a few lose focus when teachers' explanations of learning go on too long.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have total confidence in the adults who look after them and say that they feel safe in the school. This view is shared by all of the parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire and those spoken to during the inspection.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations. They are aware of the risks posed when using the internet and are clear about what they would do if they found something untoward on computers.
- Pupils have a suitable understanding about different kinds of bullying, including physical bullying, cyber-bullying and persistent name-calling. While they say that there have been a few incidents of bullying in the past, they are confident that adults will deal promptly with any of their anxieties or concerns.
- The school has made particularly good arrangements to support pupils with complex needs and who may be potentially vulnerable. These include the effective use of specialist support and close links with external agencies.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching across the school ensures that all groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well. Previous weaknesses in teaching have been successfully tackled.
- Teachers' successful classroom management is based on good relationships with pupils and understanding of their individual abilities. This promotes good attitudes to learning and makes pupils want to try their best for their teachers. This is one of the reasons why pupils are making good progress and standards are

rising.

- The impact of more consistently good teaching over time is seen in the work in pupils' books and in the many displays of their work in corridors and classrooms.
- In most lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan work that is generally at the right level of difficulty for pupils of different ages and abilities. In a successful English lesson with Year 5 and Year 6 pupils, for example, pupils made rapid progress in extracting information from text because the learning tasks were carefully planned to challenge all ability levels and the teacher constantly checked pupils' understanding before moving on.
- Exemplary marking provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work, and teachers make sure that pupils respond to this advice. This underpins the good progress pupils are making.
- The teaching of the most-able pupils is good. Lessons are generally well planned to ensure that these pupils are challenged through additional activities or tasks that enable them to achieve at a higher level.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit from the well-planned individual support from teachers and teaching assistants. Together they ensure that appropriate work is provided for these pupils. Skilled teaching assistants provide particularly good support for pupils with statements of special educational needs.
- The teaching of mathematics is good across the school. Pupils are given many opportunities to apply and develop their numeracy and calculation skills in a variety of contexts.
- The teaching of reading is very effective, especially in Key Stage 2. Regular quizzes on pupils' reading motivate them to read more widely and more often. Writing is also taught well in Key Stage 2, with pupils making good progress in writing for different purposes and different audiences. However, progress in writing in Key Stage 1 slows when there is not enough emphasis on the basic literacy skills and the quality of the presentation of pupils' writing.
- The teaching of phonics in Key Stage 1 is not always as effective because of weaknesses in adults' knowledge of how phonics should be systematically taught. Occasionally, teachers do not make the best use of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have risen over the last three years. In 2014, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were above average, with above average proportions of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in each subject. These standards reflect both the good progress of the most-able pupils and the good achievement of all groups of pupils when their skills on entry to Year 1 are taken into account.
- Because of the small cohort sizes, the performance of individual pupils can have a disproportionate effect on the performance of the school as a whole. This makes comparisons with national figures unreliable. Nevertheless, the proportion of pupils who make and exceed the expected progress compares well with national averages and pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Progress is most rapid in Years 3 to 6 where teaching is consistently good. Work in pupils' English and mathematics books, clearly shows that pupils in Year 6 are making good progress and are on track to reach their challenging targets.
- There has been an improvement in reading and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1. In 2014, standards in mathematics rose to above average, while standards in reading rose and were average. However, standards in writing, although showing slight improvement, were below average. This is because there were weaknesses in some pupils' basic literacy and handwriting.

- There are too few disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium to make the usual judgement on their attainment at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics without risk of identifying them. However, the additional support and resources provided for these pupils are securing good progress in both English and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because the school successfully identifies their learning needs and ensures that additional support is carefully tailored to help meet them. This support is particularly effective in ensuring that pupils who have a statement of special educational needs make good progress.
- The results of the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 showed that in 2014 a lower proportion of pupils achieved the expected standard than was found nationally. This was not the case in 2013, when most pupils achieved the expected standard. The school is now tracking pupils' phonic abilities more closely, having identified inconsistent teaching of phonics in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils enjoy physical activity. Their health and well-being are enhanced by their participation in the wider range of sports activities now offered, including swimming.
- Displays of pupils' work show that they achieve well in a range of subjects. They produce good artwork, for example, and displays of topic work show the good development of creative and investigative skills, and their understanding of diverse faiths and cultures.

The early years provision is good

- The quality of education in the early years has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Pending the appointment of a new early years leader, leadership and management is presently being overseen by the headteacher. This arrangement is effective in ensuring the continuing drive for improvement. Links with parents have been strengthened and they are confident that their children are safe and secure because they receive good care and support from adults.
- Because of the small size of each year group, children's skills on entry to the Nursery and Reception classes can vary widely. While in general skills and knowledge are broadly typical for their age, in some years there are particular weaknesses in communication and language.
- Good teaching enables children to make good progress and they are well prepared for Year 1. For a few children, progress in literacy is not quite as strong as in other areas.
- Adults know individual children exceptionally well and keep close checks on their progress, which is recorded in well-maintained 'learning journals'. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their individual needs are well known and they are provided with the support needed to meet those needs.
- Children develop positive attitudes to learning because of the strong focus on developing personal and social skills. They learn to play well together and understand the need to share and take turns. The indoor and outdoor areas are used with enthusiasm, and adults make good use of well-chosen questions to develop children's language skills.
- The procedures for keeping children safe are secure, and regular checks are undertaken to make sure that equipment is safe.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	125708
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	453452

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Lambe
Headteacher	Jane Price
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2013
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