

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Chapel Green, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 2LB

Inspection dates 5–6 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well from their starting points and their attainment is above average in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is mostly good. It is sometimes outstanding in Year 6. Pupils who find learning difficult make good progress because of good care and support.
- Those pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit from good levels of support so that they achieve as well as others.
- Pupils' information and communication technology skills are used well within other subjects.
- Pupils say, 'We all get on well together' and that they feel safe and enjoy school.
- Good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development fosters their good behaviour and attitudes to learning. They are well prepared and confident in starting their next schools.
- The headteacher and other leaders, including governors, are ambitious and effective. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement made since the last inspection are moving the school forward well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to work more independently.
- Planning for what pupils will learn does not always ensure that pupils have enough opportunities to use their writing and numeracy skills in different subjects.
- The outside learning environment for the youngest children is very small and limits children's abilities to explore and develop their learning and skills as well as they can inside the classroom.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors saw 17 lessons or parts of lessons, which included the teaching of phonics (letter patterns and the sounds they represent) and support sessions. Senior staff accompanied the inspection team on a number of these lesson observations.
- Inspectors also listened to pupils read and observed pupils during break times. They looked at pupils' work in books as well during lessons.
- Discussions were held with pupils, senior leaders, two members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 22 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as the parents' responses to the governing body questionnaire and 16 staff responses.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documentation, including policies relating to safeguarding, records on behaviour, information on pupils' progress and attendance records. Inspectors looked through information available on the school's website.

Inspection team

Sheila Browning, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Lewis

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's is an average sized primary school. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of one Reception class.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A few are from minority ethnic heritages, very few are at early stage of learning to speak English.
- A below average proportion is known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is extra funding provided by the government for disadvantaged pupils.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is below average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. However, the numbers vary across the year groups and they are much higher in some than others, as are the numbers joining and leaving the school at points other than at the start of the school year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school uses Grove Park Special School provision on a weekly basis to support children with severe learning needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or outstanding across all year groups by:
 - providing more experiences for pupils to write at length and help them to improve their handwriting skills in English and in other subjects
 - extending the opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in practical activities related to solving everyday problems
 - planning more opportunities for pupils to learn independently.
- Improve the outside learning environment for the reception class so that it enables staff to provide the same good quality learning opportunities for children as they experience in their classroom.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in their early language and social skills. As a result, they enter Year 1 mostly having met the standards expected. However, the physical limitations of the outdoor learning area means that children do not experience the same good quality learning experiences in developing their social and physical skills as they do inside their class.
- Pupils' skills continue to develop and, as a result, they make good progress and achieve well. This is seen in their results in 2012, when Year 6 pupils achieved above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' achievement and rates of progress have improved since the last inspection, particularly in learning letter sounds and combinations (phonics) and in their knowledge and understanding of mathematics. In the recent phonics screening check for Year 1 pupils, the school achieved results above the national average.
- Pupils show good skills in story mapping, studying key characters and settings, using different forms of language and punctuation and talking through ideas. However, apart from in Year 6, they do not always put these skills into practice by writing at length. Where pupils do write in detail, they do so with confidence and imagination, they use a wide range of vocabulary and they try to spell correctly, although their handwriting is often untidy.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is above average but pupils do not always apply their mathematical skills to practical situations, for example investigating and solving practical problems.
- Across the school, pupils enjoy reading widely and frequently. Pupils have a good understanding of play scripts, which was evident in the work they had completed about Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.
- Pupils use information and communication technology confidently across a range of subjects, for example in their learning journals when researching facts about 'The Vile Victorians' or writing about 'Inspirational People' and 'Traditional Tales'. Year 4 successfully created a stick man animation and Year 5 designed a cover for the school's Christmas production of 'Dream on'.
- Pupils achieve well across a range of subjects, for example in science, design and technology, physical education, drama and art.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively, to employ extra staff to support smaller teaching groups. This ensures good support for pupils so that their progress is improving.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve as well as others because their needs are clearly identified and they receive carefully tailored support and guidance personalised to their needs. Pupils at early stages of learning English take a full part in activities and are learning English quickly. As a result, pupils make the same good progress as others.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good. The pace of learning is usually brisk; pupils have a 'hands on' approach and are highly challenged so they make good progress. In two Year 5/6 top and lower set mathematics classes, pupils were exceptionally well challenged to explain their mental calculations and to describe the properties of different mathematical shapes. Pupils are often involved in assessing each other's learning.
- Teaching in Reception is pitched just at the right level to excite, engage and build on young children's creativity and imagination. Routines and expectations are clearly understood, though a few find it hard to comply and need lots of gentle reminders. The Reception indoor environment is much improved. It is well organised and spacious, with good quality resources and working displays. The outdoor learning environment is cramped and open to inclement weather; it is uninspiring and limits teachers in planning for more exciting learning opportunities.

- Pupils told inspectors how much they liked their teachers and relationships are positive. Teachers use opportunities well to raise pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. The youngest children learn the importance of sharing and taking turns; older pupils learn about 'Rights and Responsibilities', democracy and helping each other and they learn about different traditions and cultures.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have good levels of adult support and resources are adapted well to enable these pupils to be included in lessons. Out of class support gives more specific focus to individual pupils. Pupils learning English benefit from the advice and support teachers gain from working with language specialists in the local authority
- Effective teaching of phonics and the use of focused reading programmes play a strong part in pupils' good learning so that previous gaps in the achievement of boys and girls are rapidly closing.
- Teachers' marking gives pupils clear advice about how to improve. Pupils edit their own and each other's work and reflect on teachers' comments. Through careful questioning, teachers check to see what pupils have learned and if they have any gaps and they go back over earlier learning. However, opportunities for pupils to explore and develop their independence in their own learning are too few.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

- Pastoral care, underpinned by the school's mission statement: 'A welcoming Catholic community where we come to pray, learn, love and enjoy', provides a nurturing and caring atmosphere.
- Pupils are polite, kind to each other and happy. In lessons, they concentrate, listen carefully and follow instructions.
- Pupils are aware of the different forms of bullying through a range of activities such as anti-bullying week, and know the dangers of cyber and racial bullying. They did, however, tell inspectors that there was no bullying in school and that behaviour was typically good. School records show that the few incidences of bullying are well recorded and dealt with swiftly. All parents who completed the Parent View survey agree that their children are well cared for and are safe.
- Play leaders and buddies, who look after others, 'make a real difference in the playground', pupils said. They are also proud to be members of the school council, which helps develop pupils' sense of responsibility and has influenced improvement to the school environment and policies.
- A wide range of after-school clubs, including sports, cultural, residential trips and educational visits broaden pupils' horizons. During the inspection, pupils took part in 'The Big Sing' and 'Dream On', and 'The Nativity' rehearsals were ongoing.
- Pupils' attendance is average. The school is in the process of ensuring staff training takes place so that information is collated more effectively in order to analyse attendance and to spot any trends or patterns of non-attendance.

The leadership and management is good

- Effective leadership by the headteacher and senior leaders, and good working partnership with the local authority, have led to many positive changes since the last inspection and demonstrate the school's good capacity to bring about further improvement. The Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are restructured and the Reception class relocated.
- Professional development of staff through coaching and mentoring has been a key factor in raising teaching quality from satisfactory to good but it is not yet consistently outstanding.
- School self-evaluation is accurate. The priorities for improvement are clear and there is good guidance on how to achieve them.
- Regular checks on pupils' progress mean that children are quickly identified and assessed if they

are at risk of falling behind. The information is used to trigger additional support and catch-up programmes. Middle leaders play a key monitoring role and have a clear view of pupils' progress and what the priorities for improvement are. Leaders make sure all are included and any discrimination is not tolerated, and this is seen in the rapidly closing of the gap in pupil performance.

- Links with parents, external agencies including the use of alternative provision when necessary are of good quality. The school provides good information for parents and they are very positive about the school and its work.
- More able pupils are challenged, particularly in mathematics, as pupils move up the school. Pupils new to learning English are well supported through additional help and resources early on. The school is careful to provide the right level of support to match the learning needs of pupils so that any gaps in performance, especially for those pupils eligible for pupil premium, are minimised.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils underpins the curriculum; 'learning journeys' and a rich range of learning opportunities capture pupils' interest and encourages them to learn.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has strengthened its role and is now knowledgeable about the effectiveness of the school and pupils' achievement. Through visits, subject links and checks on the school's and teachers' performance, they regularly challenge school leaders by asking probing questions and are involved in decisions about school development, its priorities and teachers' promotion and pay. Governors continue to increase their knowledge and skills and so are becoming even more effective by attending training and working closely with the local authority. They are clear about the pupil premium funding and its impact on pupils' progress. All statutory requirements relating to safeguarding of pupils, vetting of staff and risk assessment are met.

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	114566
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	401450

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Dean
Headteacher	Maria Cowler
Date of previous school inspection	17–18 May 2012
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