

St Mary Magdalen Catholic Primary and Nursery School

Spring Street, Brighton, BN1 3EF

Inspection dates

5–6 February 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' results in all subjects are too low, including at the higher levels.
- Early Years Foundation Stage leaders' expectations of children's learning and progress are too low. They do not plan children's learning carefully enough.
- Teaching, while considerably improved, is not yet consistently good. The raised quality of teaching has not yet led to high enough results. Pupils of all different abilities, including the more able, do not always receive enough challenge to enable them to achieve well.

The school has the following strengths

- Recent improvements to leadership and management have invigorated the school. The headteacher, other leaders and governors have substantially raised expectations of teaching and pupils' learning. As a result, pupils across most of the school now make rapid progress in all subjects.
- Teaching has improved strongly as a result of clear actions taken by the headteacher and governing body.
- Pupils are well behaved and have good attitudes to learning. They are resilient when encountering difficulties. Their positive attitudes to learning are one reason for the fast progress that they currently make.
- The school keeps pupils safe and looks after them well. It has a strong inclusive ethos that enables pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds to feel accepted.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors saw teaching in every class. They observed one assembly and 18 lessons, three of which were jointly observed with the headteacher. Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and in the playground and at lunchtime.
- Discussions were held with pupils, three members of the governing body including the Chair, the headteacher and other members of staff.
- The inspectors observed many aspects of the school’s work, including supervision and support for pupils who need extra help. They heard pupils read and examined pupils’ work in their exercise books as well as work on classroom and corridor wall displays.
- The inspectors looked at a number of documents, including plans for what pupils will learn in each subject, plans for the school’s future development, and the school’s use of sports premium and pupil premium funding. The school’s arrangements for keeping pupils safe, pupils’ attendance records, and minutes of governing body meetings were considered. Records of how pupils’ learning is checked and tracked, and records of the quality of teaching, were also examined.
- The views of parents were taken into account through taking note of the 36 responses to the online Parent View survey and discussions with several parents at the start of the school day.
- Staff views were taken into consideration by looking at questionnaires completed by 14 staff members and through discussions with several members of staff.

Inspection team

Steven Popper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Roger Fenwick

Additional Inspector

Jill Thewlis

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a slightly smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for additional government funding, known as the pupil premium, is slightly higher than the national average. This extra money is provided for children in local authority care, children with a parent in the armed services and those known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with a parent in the armed forces or in local authority care currently on roll is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action and at school action plus is much higher than average. There are seven pupils with statements of special educational needs currently on roll. Some pupils have speech, language and communication needs, while others have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties or other needs.
- A large majority of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, including Black African. The majority of pupils speak English as an additional language. There is much diversity in the school.
- The number of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is higher than in most other schools.
- The school currently operates alternative provision for one pupil with special educational needs.
- There is a Nursery and Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The deputy headteacher took up her post in January 2013. The Reception and Year 5 teachers joined the school in September 2013, and the Year 2 teacher took up her post in January 2014. The Year 1 teacher re-joined the school in December 2012 after a period of secondment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the best practice found in much of the school by using it as a model to raise the quality of all teaching so that it is at least good or better by:
 - ensuring that pupils of different abilities, including the more able, receive enough challenging work to do well.
- Ensure that pupils' results in all subjects are at least in line with national expectations, and that the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels is consistent with the national profile.
- Ensure that leaders of the Early Years Foundation Stage have high expectations of children's learning and progress and that they clearly plan what the children need to learn.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils' results in all subjects are too low, including at the higher levels.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not make fast enough progress. They enter with skills that are typical and lower than typical for their age. They make slow progress and do not leave Reception well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils' results in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 have remained low over time and do not reach expected standards.
- Pupils' results in reading and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 have also remained low over time. However, the proportion of pupils who have made progress at the expected rate is higher than average in writing, and in line with most other schools in reading. Pupils' progress in mathematics has been slower than in most other schools.
- Recent strong improvements to teaching mean that most pupils across the school, including those who speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, now make rapid progress in all subjects.
- The gap in progress between pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and other pupils is being closed rapidly by the school. There is a gap in performance of less than one term at the end of Key Stage 2. This is a much narrower gap than in previous years.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs typically make rapid progress from their starting points. This is because they receive effective well-tailored support from teachers and teaching assistants.
- The school works well to ensure that any pupils or children who receive alternative provision have the best chance of making good progress.
- A large majority of parents who offered an opinion expressed positive views about their children's progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because recent strong improvements to teaching have not yet led to high enough results. In a few classes, pupils of different abilities, including the more able, do not always receive enough challenge to enable them to do well.
- Children do not learn well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers are not clear enough in their planning about precisely what they want children to learn. As a result, their teaching does not ensure that children develop important skills and knowledge securely or quickly enough.
- Most teaching in the school benefits from teachers' good knowledge of their subjects. Such teaching features clear dialogue that promotes learning well. This is one reason why most pupils now make rapid progress. However, the strong progress now being made has not yet led to high enough results.
- Teachers develop pupils' understanding through skilled use of pupils' own work. For example, in one Year 5 English lesson, the teacher shared examples of pupils' writing to enhance understanding of how to use powerful vocabulary to improve the effectiveness of descriptions.
- Teaching assistants support learning well. The way they talk to the pupils that they support is helpful and effective. The additional tuition given to pupils who need support in English and mathematics helps ensure that these pupils make rapid progress.
- Teachers' oral and written feedback to pupils tells them what they have done well and makes clear how they can improve their work. This is one reason why most pupils now make rapid progress.
- A very large majority of parents who offered an opinion considered that their children were taught well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They are resilient in the face of difficulties and do not give up, which is one reason why most pupils now make rapid progress.
- Pupils' conduct in lessons, in the playground, during lunchtime and when around the school is good. Pupils are polite, respectful and caring.
- Pupils' friendship towards other pupils from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is very inclusive. The school is successful in promoting an ethos of acceptance and values diversity.
- Pupils who talked to the inspector felt that there was little poor behaviour in the school and that staff would deal with any incidents swiftly and fairly. There have been few incidents of poor behaviour over time and these have been responded to well by the school. However, the school does not keep a detailed analysis of every incident that occurs.
- The school's management of pupils' behaviour is effective overall and most teachers' expectations of behaviour are high, although these are not as consistent in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are a few times when children and pupils are allowed to call out rather than answer questions when asked. This is why the behaviour and safety of pupils are not outstanding.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including when online. They are taught how to resolve conflicts and they understand why bullying and extreme behaviour such as racism are not acceptable.
- Attendance, including the attendance of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, has improved over time and is now in line with national expectations. This is because of the school's clear attendance policy and good relationships with parents.
- A very large majority of parents who expressed an opinion thought that behaviour in the school was well managed and that their children were safe, happy and well looked after.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Recent changes to leadership and management, including the appointment of the deputy headteacher and a new Chair and vice-chair to the governing body, have increased the school's capacity to improve. They have supported the headteacher in raising expectations and improving teaching. However, these welcome developments have not yet resulted in sufficient increases to pupils' results, and the pace of improvement, though rapid now, has been slow over time. These are reasons why leadership and management require improvement.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is not strong. Leaders' expectations of children's progress and learning are too low. This is another reason why leadership and management require improvement.
- The school's management of teachers' performance is rigorous and reflects leadership's high expectations of teachers. Teachers are properly held to account for their pupils' achievement and the quality of their teaching and, when appropriate, the headteacher and governors have taken strong actions to eradicate inadequate teaching. Teaching has improved strongly as a result.
- The school's self-evaluation is thorough and demonstrates high expectations overall. It contains a detailed and accurate analysis of data about pupils' progress and results. Previous school evaluation of the quality of teaching had little emphasis on the impact of teaching on progress; however, this is now improving.
- Middle and subject leaders are actively involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in their areas of responsibility. Subject leaders lead training for other staff and are preparing the school well for the implementation of the new National Curriculum. They are well

supported by senior leaders.

- Pupils learn a broad range of well-planned subjects and experience interesting topics. The English and mathematics leaders have enhanced the school's development of pupils' skills in their subjects.
- There are good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has a strong spiritual ethos, which is gently and positively reinforced through assemblies, displays and the overall culture of the school. The inclusive and aspirational nature of the school enables pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds to feel totally accepted. The school actively works against discrimination in its day-to-day work and in special events, such as a 'Disability in Sports Awareness Day' that the school hosted in conjunction with a local football club.
- Sports premium funding is spent effectively in conjunction with a local group of schools. It is used to enable pupils to access and engage with a range of sports, which enhances their well-being. The school has purchased and renewed sports equipment and is developing teachers' skills in this area.
- Pupil premium funding is spent on effective one-to-one and small-group tuition in English and mathematics for eligible pupils. These measures have contributed to the rapid narrowing of the gap between eligible and non-eligible pupils.
- The school ensures that all pupils are safe. It keeps appropriate and up-to-date records of its work in this area and meets statutory requirements.
- The local authority has offered substantial support to the school. It has given training to teachers and governors, conducted a challenging review of pupils' achievement, and provided funding to help improve the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- A very large majority of parents who offered an opinion considered the school to be well led.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The appointments of a new Chair and vice-chair to the governing body in September 2013 have substantially raised governors' level of challenge to the school, which is now very high. Governors have received substantial training, including on pupil performance data and safeguarding. Governors understand the school's strengths and have a clear and accurate understanding of where it needs to improve. They set the headteacher rigorous performance management targets that reflect the key priorities of the school. They check that teachers are appointed and deployed well and that any underperformance is dealt with appropriately. They scrutinise school finances carefully, including the use and impact of pupil and sports premium funding. They have had a strong impact on the school's increased pace of improvement.

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	114541
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	431393

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	252
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Kingsley
Headteacher	Halden Eady
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 April 2009
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