

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Church Road, Brighton, BN41 1LB

Inspection dates 24–25 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is improving. Pupils make good progress from starting points which are often low and reach standards which are average by the end of Year 6.
- The new headteacher has been highly effective in raising the expectations of staff and pupils. She has inspired self-confidence and ambition in both.
- Governors and leaders at all levels work as a team and have been successful in improving the quality of teaching and raising standards.
- Teaching is generally good and an increasing amount is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to provide pupils with interesting activities and high-quality resources.
- Pupils say they enjoy school and feel secure. The school cares for pupils very well and works effectively to keep them safe.
- The school's strong values and Christian ethos underpin the very positive learning environment. Pupils are well behaved and show consideration for others.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching and a small amount requires improvement.
- Occasionally, teaching does not challenge pupils appropriately, particularly the most-able pupils.
- Teachers do not always clarify, including through marking, what pupils must do to improve their work.
- Not all teachers and teaching assistants use questioning skilfully enough in lessons to develop pupils' understanding.

Information about this inspection

- Teaching and learning were observed in 16 lessons and pupils' work was examined in English and mathematics.
- Some observations were joint visits with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Two whole-school assemblies were observed.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils and three members of the school's governing body. The lead inspector spoke by telephone with a representative of the local authority. One meeting with pupils was dedicated to a discussion of reading, with an opportunity for pupils to read aloud.
- Informal discussions with pupils took place at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of the 43 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 13 responses to the staff questionnaire. Parents' involvement in school life was discussed with senior leaders. At the end of one day, informal conversations were held with parents in the school playground.
- A range of documentation was looked at including records relating to pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Jacqueline White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Brian Netto

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- In this average-sized primary school, the proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average and the proportion speaking English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - pupils are always challenged appropriately in lessons, particularly the most able
 - teachers' feedback to pupils, including through marking, clarifies what pupils must do to improve their work
 - all teachers and teaching assistants use questioning skilfully in lessons to develop pupils' understanding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- As a result of strengthened leadership and better teaching most pupils are achieving well and are becoming confident learners. It is clear from pupils' work that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising.
- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of development that are generally below those typically expected. They settle in quickly and make good progress because strong partnerships with parents are established and there is an effective focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills.
- Pupils have not made such consistently good progress in reading as they have in writing and mathematics. In 2013, the Year 1 phonics (the sounds that letters make) checks showed that standards were below average. The school has put a number of successful strategies in place to tackle this issue. Staff have been involved in training to help pupils better link sounds and letters. Pupils have access to a wider range of good quality books and practise their reading skills very frequently. Consequently, most are now making good progress in reading.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium are making good progress because the additional funding is used very well to boost their achievement and personal development. In 2013, by the end of Year 6 they attained as well as their classmates in reading and were about four months behind in writing and six months behind in mathematics. The school's regular reviews of the pupils' achievement and well-being show that these gaps continue to narrow and that most eligible pupils enjoy and benefit from school life as much as their classmates.
- The school is committed to promoting equality of opportunity. Discrimination is not tolerated. Together, teachers and well-trained teaching assistants provide carefully tailored support to pupils who need it, for example, in class and in small withdrawal groups. Consequently, all groups within the school are making good progress, including disabled pupils those with special educational needs, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language.
- The most able pupils make good progress but occasionally, tasks do not provide enough challenge to enable them to make outstanding progress.
Achievement is not outstanding because teaching, although good overall, is not always strong enough to ensure pupils make rapid rather than good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good. The expectations of staff have risen in recent months and pupils have responded well. Most pupils strive to do their best and show a willingness to persevere with tasks.
- The environment for learning has been greatly improved since the previous inspection. Classrooms are bright and well organised with high-quality displays that support pupils' learning. Teachers successfully bring learning alive for pupils, for example, in using interactive whiteboards well. In one lesson film and sound were used to take pupils 'on a safari' to describe the animals they encountered. This captured their imaginations and enabled them to extend their use and understanding of adjectives.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are developed systematically through a variety of carefully planned, well-resourced activities. Teachers usually explain tasks clearly and make sure that pupils know what they must do to complete them successfully.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff provide a stimulating and caring environment where children become confident learners. They enjoy the selection of activities that extend their personal, social, language and number skills, and prepare them well for Year 1.
- While the school has a marking policy, there is variation in the quality of teachers' marking and in their verbal feedback to pupils. Consequently, pupils are not always clear about the next steps

they must take to improve their subject skills.

- Teachers are making much better use of information about pupils' learning to plan activities that will build on what they already know but there are still instances where work is too hard or too easy for some pupils. In particular, the most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently.
- There are teachers and teaching assistants who use questioning expertly to check and develop pupils' understanding. This successful practice has not been fully shared and there are occasions when ineffective questioning slows pupils' progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons and around the school, pupils are polite and respectful to adults and their classmates.
- Most pupils want to learn and take a pride in their work. Their enthusiasm for learning has been enhanced by the much wider range of after-school activities that help them to develop their different talents as well as their social and leadership skills.
- Procedures for following up any absence from school have been tightened and this, along with the richer variety of experiences provided for pupils, has improved attendance so that it is now broadly average.
- The school's well-kept records show that bullying and misbehaviour are uncommon. Pupils confirm this is the case. They are very aware of the different forms of bullying and say that if there are any problems they are dealt with quickly by staff.
- The school manages pupils' behaviour well and most parents agree with this view. The clear systems highlight the consequences of any misbehaviour and ensure that good behaviour is rewarded. In the last three years, there have been no exclusions.
- Pupils enjoy their breakfasts and the opportunity to try different foods at the well-run breakfast club. They like the chance it gives them to be sociable, play games or read before lessons start.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils learn about both internet and road safety, and, in and out of lessons, there are many opportunities to discuss how to limit their exposure to harm in situations they might find themselves in.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because occasionally a few pupils need and receive extra prompting from adults to keep them fully involved in learning.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has made many changes for the better in a short time. Under her strong leadership, senior and middle leaders have developed into an effective team with ample capacity to keep the school moving in the right direction.
- The roles of middle leaders have been clarified. They are focused sharply and successfully on raising standards.
- Together, with governors, leaders have transformed the culture of the school into one of high expectations. As a consequence, teaching and pupils' achievement have improved considerably.
- Leadership and management are not outstanding because a small amount of teaching still requires improvement.
- Leaders and governors are rigorous in reviewing all aspects of the school's work. They know how well the school is performing compared to all schools. At the heart of their ambitious plans for further improvement is the strong desire to ensure the potential of every pupil is fully realised.
- The school's success is based on the rigour of its systems for managing staff performance, and checking the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils.
- Staff morale is high. The headteacher's clear direction is appreciated. Teachers and teaching assistants understand that they are accountable for pupils' progress and are united in their drive to raise standards.

- Parents are very pleased with the improvements they have seen. New channels of communication between the school and parents have been opened. For example, the flow of information between home and school has been improved through the revamped website and the Parents' Forum that is also attended by governors. Senior staff are very accessible to parents.
- Most parents who completed the online questionnaire would recommend the school to others.
- The subjects that are taught and the increasing variety of extra activities are well planned and provide pupils with rich opportunities for learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well catered for.
- Very good use is made of the additional funding to engage pupils in physical activities. The school is employing a specialist sports teacher to develop teachers' expertise and pupils' skills. Opportunities for pupils to take part in competitive sport have also been increased. Impact is very evident in pupils' eagerness to take part in physical activities and in their improving levels of fitness.
- The local authority has made a positive contribution to the school's development by funding a consultant who has worked effectively alongside the leadership team to provide an objective view of the school's work.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body makes a strong contribution to the quality of education the school provides. Governors have a wide range of skills and experience that are used well to support and challenge senior leaders.
 - Governors are very well informed. They know how well the school performs against national standards and analyse the school's assessment information carefully. They know exactly how the pupil premium funding is allocated and what kind of impact it has had on pupils' well-being and achievement.
 - Governors are very well trained, including in the financial management of the school. They are astute in reviewing a range of evidence to make judgements about how well the school is doing. Visits to the school during the day are routine. Governors meet regularly with staff and seek the views of parents and pupils.
 - Governors have a clear picture of the quality of teaching and ensure that a strong link is maintained between teachers' salaries and their effectiveness.

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	114570
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	442452

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Keating
Headteacher	Sarah Clayton
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 September 2012
Telephone number	01273 418416
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