

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Dunstable Road, Caddington, Luton, LU1 4BB

Inspection dates

7–8 October 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment, at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2015 was below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is not good because teachers do not consistently set work at the right level for different groups of pupils and do not always have high enough expectations of the quality of pupils' work.
- The teaching of mathematics, in particular, is not challenging enough. As a result, pupils do not make enough progress in this subject.
- Pupils in the current Year 6 have some way to go to reach national expectations in 2016 in mathematics. This is due to them having to catch up on previous gaps in their learning.
- Teachers do not use assessment information well enough to stretch pupils or quickly target support for pupils who are underachieving.
- Leaders' and governors' evaluation of achievement and teaching is over-generous. As a consequence, they have not swiftly tackled areas that need improvement.
- Leaders do not set sharp enough targets for improvement and therefore it is difficult to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress.
- Middle leaders do not contribute well enough to raising standards of achievement in the areas for which they are responsible.
- The school's systems for assessing pupils' learning and progress are still developing. Leaders do not ensure that school policies, such as those relating to assessment and marking, are applied consistently.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils feel safe and behave well. They are polite and courteous and develop confidence and self-esteem.
- Children in the early years make good progress and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Reading is taught well and pupils' progress rates are accelerating.
- The headteacher engages well with parents, and has developed a good partnership with the local community.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - teachers set work that is at the appropriate level of difficulty for pupils
 - teachers make good use of assessment information to adapt work to meet pupils' needs
 - pupils present their work neatly.

- Ensure that leaders, including governors, are sufficiently focused on securing good progress for pupils in all subjects by:
 - setting sharp targets in development planning so that governors can play a fuller part in holding leaders to account for pupils' progress
 - strengthening the role of middle leaders so that they fully understand the part they play in raising standards
 - using assessment information to identify underachievement and respond more quickly when this happens
 - checking that teachers consistently apply school policies, such as those relating to assessment and marking, so that pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding throughout the school.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to improve this aspect of leadership and management.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the actions leaders have taken, since the last inspection, have not ensured sufficiently good progress for all pupils, particularly in mathematics.
 - Leaders' and governors' evaluation of the effectiveness of actions to improve pupil outcomes is not accurate enough or based on secure evidence. As a consequence, leaders have an over-inflated view of pupil achievement and the quality of teaching, and they have not intervened quickly enough when dips in achievement are evident.
 - Not all of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been fully addressed. This is particularly so in mathematics. However, there is improvement in some areas of the school's work. For example, reading outcomes continue to improve and are beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of pupils' writing.
 - Leaders better understand the school's priorities and actions that need to be taken. However, because most of the team is new, improvement in pupils' outcomes is limited, particularly in Key Stage 2.
 - The headteacher has recently developed some teachers' roles. Middle leaders now have responsibility for each key stage. Nonetheless, their understanding of the part that they play in driving improvement in pupil outcomes is still in its infancy. As a consequence, evaluations of provision, such as the quality of teaching in mathematics, is not yet based on secure evidence.
 - The school is committed to securing equal opportunities for all pupils. Pupil premium funding is beginning to support disadvantaged pupils well. As a result, the gap between these pupils' attainment and that of other pupils is narrowing, but not as rapidly as it should be.
 - The additional funding for sport has been used to extend opportunities for pupils to take part in sports clubs and activities such as 'bikeability'. As a result, the numbers of children attending clubs has increased and inter-school sport competitions, like football, are more commonplace. A specialist sports coach is also enhancing the knowledge and skills of staff so that they will be able to run their own clubs next year.
 - The curriculum is balanced and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. It is rich in terms of extra-curricular visits and visitors to the school. For example, pupils were engrossed in the African drumming session seen during the inspection. Other pupils were cooking with staff from the local special school who regularly visit the school. Examples like these ensure that pupils' learning is varied and enjoyable, and contribute well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- **The governance of the school**
- Governors have worked with school leaders to ensure that the information they receive is more easily understood. However, the evidence on which this is based has not been challenged effectively to ensure it is an accurate picture. As a result, the governing body has an over-inflated view of pupils' progress across the school.
 - Governors have welcomed the support provided by local authority advisers, a local leader of education and specialist teachers. This has supported governors' understanding of pupils' needs in upper Key Stage 2. They agree that they will need to keep a closer check on pupils' progress this year so that pupils achieve the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 2.
 - Governors are developing their understanding about different aspects of the school's work. For example, they now pay closer attention to the impact of the additional funding that the school receives for pupil premium and sports development. They are also more knowledgeable about the pre-school provision. They value this important stage of children's education and want the good work in the early years to continue.
 - Governors are well informed about the performance of teachers and understand the link between performance targets, pupils' progress and teachers' pay.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders work well with other professionals outside of the school to ensure that pupils are safe and their families supported. The headteacher in particular has developed, over time, a very good relationship with parents. As a result, parents will often seek him out to discuss any emerging concerns or worries they may have.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not effective in all classes. As a result, pupils' achievement is inconsistent, particularly in mathematics.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do. For example, in some mathematics lessons, the most-able pupils are not challenged. One pupil told the inspector, 'I know this. I have been doing it since the beginning of the year.'
- Teachers do not use assessment information well enough to check on pupils' understanding and move them on in their learning. However, there are some good examples of teachers using questions skilfully to make pupils think hard about what they are learning. Lively debates take place with some competitiveness between pupils, resulting in pupils challenging themselves and their peers.
- Teachers' expectations of the quality and quantity of work in pupils' books varies from class to class and between subjects. The presentation of pupils' work is often untidy. There are, however, some examples of good presentation of work and higher expectations. Middle leaders are beginning to use these to develop a more consistent approach across the school.
- Teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is effective. This has led to an increase in the number of pupils reaching the standard expected in Year 1. Phonic skills are used well by pupils when they read. Many activities have been designed to encourage reading. This is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to reading, especially boys.
- The teaching of writing is improving. It is evident that pupils are responding well to regular opportunities to write in class. As a result, most pupils are making expected progress. However, the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in all classes still lags behind reading. This is partly because pupils are not yet using their phonic skills well when writing and the most-able pupils are not being challenged sufficiently to achieve what they can.
- Teachers plan learning and support that helps disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to make progress at a similar rate to their peers. Teaching assistants are used well to support and motivate individual pupils and to ensure they understand what to do.
- Teachers often plan learning that is fun and exciting. They use computer programs, music and pupils' own work to engage all pupils in well-planned themes. For example, pupils in a science lesson on the 'formation of living things' were animatedly explaining how their imaginary animals would be able to survive using the features that they had given them. When asked why the animal needed a tortoise-like shell on its back, the pupil replied, 'It is for protection from animals that might come up from behind'; to which another pupil added, 'You could give your animal eyes on the back of its head because that would be better.'
- Homework is appropriate to the age of the pupils and they respond well to it, as do the parents. The quality of work, and how it is used within the classroom, is developing.
- Prompts to support pupils in their learning are displayed in all classrooms. Pupils say this is helpful for 'when we are stuck'. There is also evidence of celebration of some pupils' work in classrooms and shared areas, although this is not widespread.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils know about bullying and the various forms it takes. They say bullying is rare. They are reminded by posters such as 'You've got to remember, stop, think, words can hurt.' Pupils are confident that leaders 'will sort it out' if bullying occurs.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in school and out in the community. They are clear on how to be safe on the internet, including not sharing their details with others. Parents say, 'safety is given a high priority in the school'.
- Pupils readily take on additional responsibilities and are proud to carry out such duties as playground buddies, captains of the school's teams or being a member of the school council. Pupils feel they 'make a difference'.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are confident and understand important values such as kindness, caring and democracy. They now take part in debating. In the assembly for parents, Year 6 pupils led the session showing initiative and independence, confidently developing the idea of 'How can we help our pupils?'

- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development very well. Pupils are very well cared for. They have great confidence in the adults in the school 'to help us if we need it'. Opportunities for pupils to appreciate other cultures are less well developed. Nevertheless, pupils do have an appreciation of others and show respect towards their peers.
- Parents appreciate the school's caring ethos and find the staff very helpful. They report that the headteacher is 'very open to suggestions' and 'listens to any concerns we have'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They conduct themselves well in and around the school and are very polite and respectful of each other and all adults. They say that the good behaviour seen during the inspection at play- and lunchtimes was 'usual'.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are rare because pupils say they 'get on well together'. They are clear about who to go to if they have a problem and use the school's 'chat boxes' well if they want to raise any concerns.
- All adults consistently use the school's behaviour system and pupils understand the consequences if they do not behave well. They cite some pupils who occasionally interrupt their learning, but they say generally behaviour is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are largely good, even when learning is not as challenging for some pupils as it might be. On these occasions pupils become fidgety and less attentive; but this does not occur routinely.
- The school's system for recording incidents of poor behaviour is comprehensive and fully involves parents if the need arises.
- All parents spoken to during the inspection are very positive about pupils' behaviour. They say it is managed well by teachers and leaders. Parents who took the time to express their views on Parent View said that 'it is a very caring, nurturing school and the children's behaviour on the whole is exemplary'.
- The school promotes regular attendance in a variety of ways. The impact of this is that pupils' attendance in most classes is typically above the national average. This is celebrated weekly in assemblies.
- The breakfast and after-school club are well run and pupils enjoy attending. The breakfast club is helping to improve attendance and punctuality and pupils' readiness for the school day.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because in 2015 the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Last year's Year 6 class was the first group of pupils to go through the school to the end of Year 6. A considerable number of these pupils had joined the school since Key Stage 1. Although their progress was better in Years 5 and 6, almost half of the pupils did not make expected progress in mathematics over Key Stage 2.
- Some of last year's Year 6 pupils had experienced teaching, in Year 3 and Year 4, that was not consistently good. As a result, their progress had been slow. Consequently, these pupils had considerable gaps in their knowledge and understanding, particularly in mathematics. The school's own assessment information shows that these gaps are not closing quickly enough to ensure that the present Year 6 pupils reach national expectations in 2016.
- Current information suggests that progress in reading and writing is more consistent in most classes. The school's own assessment information shows that not all pupils are making expected progress in mathematics in some classes.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has risen over the last three years. It was the best for several years in 2015 and is now above the national average because teaching has improved
- In 2015, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, who were eligible for the pupil premium, was below that of their peers. A significant proportion of these pupils had additional needs and many joined the school at different times during the year. Current information suggests that this group's progress compares favourably to that of their classmates.
- The progress of the most-able pupils has not been good enough. This is because the work that some teachers provide for these pupils is not challenging enough and teachers have not had high expectations. However, a larger proportion of pupils currently in the school are on track to achieve higher levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in 2016.

- The progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, compares favourably with that of their classmates. This is because they are given targeted support in the classroom, which pupils say helps them with their work.
- The proportion of children who leave the early years with a good level of development has increased for the last three years. In 2015, this proportion was close to the national average.

Early years provision

is good

- Children settle quickly and become self-confident. They make good progress in communication and language, literacy, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development from their different starting points. They leave the early years well prepared for Year 1.
- Leaders have an accurate picture of what each child needs because they regularly check on individual children to see where they are in their learning. The growing effectiveness of the relationship with parents is also playing an important part in making the transition from home to school as smooth as possible.
- The school's new system for recording children's development is used well. Leaders carefully check the results of assessments to plan activities that move children on in their learning. The most-able children are challenged by skilful questions which make them think. 'Why is the sand so wet?' was a question asked of children making a 'cake' in the sandpit. Between the three children, and after an interesting discussion, they decided it was, 'So it will stick together. Otherwise the cake will fall over.'
- Leaders have worked tirelessly to improve provision for the very youngest children. As a result, and according to the school's own information, children entering the Reception class in 2015 are at a stage of development that is more typical for their age. The school is confident that this will continue to be the case and will be further supported by the on-site pre-school, which opens in 2016.
- Teaching is good in both Nursery and Reception classes. All adults are used well to support and direct children's learning. Consequently, children of all ages talk confidently about what they are doing and finding out. Children excitedly told inspectors what they expected to see would happen with large 'balls' of ice. 'This is going to melt, but it is very slow. I am putting coloured water on it to hurry it up!' said one child.
- Children are given good opportunities to explore ideas for themselves during the 'free-flow' sessions each day. The range of activities is considerable and varied. Even the youngest children sustain their interest in the activity they have chosen. This is due to the timely interventions made by adults.
- Adults stimulate children's learning by providing an inviting, bright and varied environment. Areas are well defined to develop different areas of the curriculum. Children regularly dress themselves and put on their wellies to enjoy the exciting outside area.
- Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are good. There are no breaches of welfare arrangements. Adults know the children extremely well and cater for their individual needs with care. They ensure that children are safe and behave well.

School details

Unique reference number	109630
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10001941

This inspection 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	217
Appropriate authority	Governing body
Chair	Pauline Cotton
Headteacher	Steve Chiswell
Telephone number	01582 602420
Website	www.stmarysprimary.org.uk
Email address	stmaryscadd@cbc.beds.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 October 2013

Information about this school

- St Mary's is smaller than the average-sized primary school. However, it is growing in numbers having moved from being a lower school to a primary school in 2013.
- 2015 was the first year when the school provided for Year 6 children. Almost half of this year group joined the school between Year 1 and Year 6.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic groups is above the national average. The proportion of those pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. This is additional funding for looked-after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- All members of the senior leadership team have taken up their posts since the school was last inspected.
- A breakfast and an after-school club are provided for pupils by the school.
- In 2015 the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, the majority of which were jointly observed with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons and attended an assembly.
- Inspectors listened to Key Stage 1 pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of staff, four members of the governing body, groups of pupils and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors examined a range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, the systems to track pupils' progress, policies and records relating to behaviour and attendance. They also looked at records of the monitoring of teaching by senior staff, performance management information, safeguarding documentation and reports from external personnel and samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors analysed questionnaires from 18 members of staff.
- The Parent View online survey response of 28 parents was taken into account, along with letters from parents, and views expressed to the inspectors at the end of the school day.

Inspection team

Ruth Brock, lead inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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