

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Church Road, Brighton, BN41 1LB

Inspection dates 19–20 September 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Teaching is not consistently good. Sometimes lessons do not build well on pupils' previous attainment.
- By Year 6, boys achieve better in mathematics than in reading and girls do not do as well in mathematics as in reading and writing.
- Some pupils' progress is hampered by weaker spelling. Pupils do not consistently apply their knowledge of phonics (the links between letters and sounds) when writing.
- Lower attaining pupils do not always have a good grasp of phonics.
- Pupils' progress in Year 1 is slower than in Reception and Year 2.
- Pupils are polite and respectful but lose concentration when teachers talk for too long.
- Subject leaders are not having a full impact on raising achievement because of staffing changes.
- The governing body is increasingly holding the school to account but does not ask enough questions about why some groups, particularly those supported under the pupil premium initiative, achieve better than others.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' writing is improving and was above average in the latest Year 6 national tests.
- Children in Reception achieve well.
- Good management of teachers' performance has led to good improvements in the lessons given by teachers who have been at the school for some time.
- Teaching is consistently good in Year 2 and Year 5.
- Pupils' attendance is good. Pupils are safe and behave well around the school at play times and lunchtimes.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons, of which four were joint observations with the headteacher, and heard a sample of pupils read from Years 1, 2 and 6.
- Inspectors discussed different aspects of their work with pupils and looked at the school's own data on pupils' attainment and progress, as well as a range of their work.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, including the Chair, members of staff holding senior and middle leadership responsibilities, and a representative from the local authority.
- In planning the inspection, inspectors took account of the 23 responses to the on-line Parent View survey and parents' letters to inspectors.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including plans for improvement, teachers' plans, safeguarding arrangements, records relating to behaviour and attendance, governing body minutes and records of the school leaders' monitoring of lessons.

Inspection team

Eileen Chadwick, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

George Long

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school. It is situated in an urban area on the outskirts of Brighton.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs at school action is in line with the national average. The proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average. These pupils' needs mainly relate to speech, language, literacy and numeracy difficulties, and also to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average, whilst the proportion speaking English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- In most years, a few pupils arrive directly from abroad speaking little or no English.
- The school was inspected in September 2011 as part of Ofsted's monitoring of satisfactory schools and a mathematics subject survey inspection took place in March 2012.
- The school has received support from the local authority for the past year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been significant changes to the teaching staff in the past few years. Half of the teaching staff began in September 2012, including the acting deputy headteacher.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club for pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to be at least good by:
 - strengthening the teaching of reading in literacy lessons and enabling pupils to consistently apply their phonics skills when reading and writing, including in Year 1
 - ensuring lesson introductions are not over long, so that pupils start their independent work more promptly and take more responsibility for their own learning
 - using assessment information more effectively to plan and teach activities which more closely match pupils' different abilities.
- Raise achievement to more consistently good by:
 - ensuring girls and boys attain equally well in reading and mathematics, quickly addressing any gaps in girls' mathematical understanding
 - improving pupils' spelling
 - improving lower attaining pupils' phonics skills, ensuring they are heard to read every day, and implementing a systematic programme for teaching phonics in Key Stage 2.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - developing the roles of subject leaders so they take a full part in improving teaching and pupils' achievement
 - ensuring the governing body rigorously evaluates the way pupil premium funding is spent for its impact on raising the achievement of the pupils who qualify for it.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Year 6 pupils' attainment is broadly average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. Attainment is rising in writing for both boys and girls. Boys' reading standards are improving, but fewer reach the expected standards in reading than do so in writing and mathematics. Fewer girls reach the expected and higher levels of attainment in mathematics than should be the case.
- Girls sometimes have gaps in their mathematical knowledge and are less sure than boys when answering questions and solving problems. Gaps are not specific to one aspect of mathematics but differ for individual girls.
- Pupils' spelling improves by Year 6 but, in other years, is a relatively weaker aspect of writing. Pupils do not consistently apply their phonics skills when spelling.
- Lower attaining pupils often have gaps in their phonics skills. This causes them to read hesitantly.
- Children start in Reception with skills and knowledge that are well below those expected for their age because the majority have limited English or weaker speaking skills. Children achieve well but, by the end of Reception, their attainment remains a little below average, especially in communication, reading and writing.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is still a little below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Although progress in Year 2 is good, it needs to improve in Year 1, where pupils do not learn to apply phonics skills well enough when reading and writing.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium funding make progress similar to that of their peers. Small group teaching speeds up the progress of pupils with special educational needs and for those who are learning to speak English as an additional language. However, daily phonics teaching, for those who need it, is not yet implemented in all classes in Key Stage 2. This restricts the consistency of progress in reading for lower attaining pupils.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well by the time they leave the school. However, these pupils' progress is uneven across different year groups due to variation in the quality of teaching.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The overall quality of teaching over time requires improvement, although there has been a trend of sustained improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection. This was also noted in the monitoring inspection and subject survey visits carried out within the last year. However, actions to secure consistently good teaching have been hampered by the large number of staff changes.
- There is some good teaching in most classes. However, it is most consistent for longer-serving teachers. In good lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge is shown by their high expectations and their skilful matching of pupils' work to their abilities.
- For example, in a good phonics lesson, the teachers' accurate assessment, ability groupings and skilled phonics teaching led to well-matched tasks for all pupils. The teaching assistant's good support enabled lower attaining pupils to learn new sounds and to apply these when reading.
- Literacy lessons are often linked with practical learning opportunities stemming from other curriculum areas. This brings their learning to life. However, teachers do not always spend enough time directly teaching reading or consistently encouraging pupils to apply their phonics skills when reading and writing.
- Initiatives such as guided reading have led to improving reading standards. However, reading records and discussion with pupils show that lower attaining pupils are not always heard to read by an adult on a daily basis. Pupils' individual reading records do not keep sufficient track of their phonics skills, which prevents staff and parents from helping pupils to practise sounds when reading.

- Consistently strong teaching in mathematics in Years 2 and 5 accelerates pupils' progress. However, too often, in mathematics lessons in other years, teachers spend too long instructing or questioning the whole class. This limits the time for pupils' independent work. Teachers' questions and tasks are sometimes too repetitive for the more able or too hard for lower attainers.
- Mathematics planning does not consistently show the levels at which the pupils are working, which hinders teachers in fully planning for the ability range.
- In the good mathematics lessons, teachers provide a secure balance between teaching skills directly and allowing enough time for practising or for solving problems. In one such lesson, the teacher's very good subject knowledge and adept questioning enabled him to quickly check pupils' understanding to ensure pupils all consistently learned well.
- In Reception, stimulating activities, including learning through play, promote children's language, early reading and mathematical development well.
- Well-trained and experienced teaching assistants provide good support for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- School leaders successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is an atmosphere of kindness and respect for each other. The warm school ethos and broad curriculum promote pupils' interest in school and sense of wonder in the world around them.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered and respect each other's cultures and backgrounds. New arrivals, including those who come directly from abroad with little or no English, are given good support and settle well.
- Pupils behave well when moving around the school. Pupils, including those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, are successfully managed by their teachers. This ensures that lessons proceed with little interruption.
- However, during over-long lesson introductions or when pupils are not given appropriate work, they lose concentration, their attention wanders and they do not work hard enough.
- Pupils do what teachers ask them to do but do not have enough opportunities to learn by working on their own.
- The large majority of parents consider that pupils are kept safe and behave well. However, a minority were concerned that there was some bullying. Discussions with pupils show they feel very safe and they are adamant there is very little bullying. Pupils are able to explain how they would deal with different kinds of bullying, for example cyber bullying and staying safe on the internet, and know to whom they would turn for help should they need it. They say they trust adults to deal with any boisterous behaviour that occasionally occurs in the playground during ball play.
- Attendance is above average, and pupils are punctual as a result of the school's effective systems for promoting this. The breakfast club provides a happy and caring start to the school day.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher sets a clear direction and is ambitious for school improvement. This is shared by senior leaders and staff. New staff are settling well and morale is high. Recently appointed senior leaders already provide good support for the headteacher and set good examples by their own good standards of teaching.
- Leadership is shared well. However, staff changes have limited the effectiveness of some middle leaders in supporting the quality of teaching and raising achievement across the school.
- The school has identified the right priorities for improving pupils' achievement, with good planning for implementing priorities. However, the school improvement plan does not show attainment targets for each year group. This limits school leaders, staff and governors in

- readily evaluating the impact of actions taken to raise attainment in each year group.
- Performance management is rigorous and leads to appropriate training for teachers, including subject training where needed. This has had a very positive impact on raising pupils' achievement in writing, and shows the school has the capacity to improve. Lesson monitoring is thorough and has helped to improve teaching.
 - The support from the local authority has been effective in the recent past in improving the teaching of writing and guided reading, and in helping governors to improve their skills in holding the school to account.
 - The curriculum is broad. It promotes useful links between subjects and contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, there is no systematic provision for developing pupils' phonics skills throughout Key Stage 2.
 - Inspectors found no evidence of any discrimination, and the school's sound promotion of equality of opportunity is shown, for example, by the good achievement of pupils who are learning English as an additional language.
 - Arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are well organised, supportive and increasingly hold the headteacher to account.
- They carefully monitor pupils' performance, including that of some groups, such as the progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- They have not yet fully monitored the impact of the school's use of the pupil premium funding on improving the achievement of those pupils who are eligible for it.

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	401451

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	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Keating
Headteacher	Joyce Jones
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2010
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