

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Manor House Road, Wednesbury, WS10 9PN

**Inspection dates** 13–14 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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 in the past has not been good enough to ensure that all pupils, including those who need extra help, make good progress in mathematics.
- Although pupils are now making progress in mathematics at a faster rate than in the past, improvements have not yet been sustained over time.
- Some of the work set for more-able pupils in mathematics is insufficiently demanding. Teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics is not as strong as it is in English.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop different approaches to solving problems and to use their mathematical skills when learning about other subjects are limited.
- The quality of teachers' marking of pupils' work in English and mathematics is uneven. Not all pupils are given clear and precise guidance about how they can improve their work.
- While those in charge of subjects and other areas check pupils' achievement, they do not have a broad enough view of what is offered to pupils over time.
- Not all parents and carers feel that they get sufficient information about how well their children are doing.

### The school has the following strengths

- A strong sense of community within the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Pupils behave well and are proud of their school. They say they feel safe and well looked after by the staff.
- Pupils make good progress in English from low starting points.
- Pupils are happy to come to school. The rate of attendance is above average and has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- Under the determined leadership of the headteacher and supported well by the governing body, the staff team are working well together to improve pupils' achievement.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons taught by eight teachers, one whole school assembly and one class worship. Four lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Short visits to observe the teaching of reading were made. Activities related to the teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs were also observed.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, staff and members of the governing body. In addition, the lead inspector talked with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors talked with pupils, listened to them read and observed them at play during break and lunch times.
- The school's safeguarding policies, improvement plans, notes from meetings of the governing body and records of pupils' behaviour were reviewed. Inspectors also looked at the work pupils were doing in their books, and at records of their progress.
- Inspectors took account of the 36 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View), a parental telephone communication and 30 replies to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors also met with parents and carers and sought their views at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school.

## Inspection team

Sarah Warboys, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Enid Korn

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School is of average size.
- A large majority of pupils are White British. Above-average proportions of pupils come from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language.
- An above-average proportion of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding to the school. The funding is based on the number of children at the school in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A breakfast and after-school club, managed by the governing body, operates on the school site.
- Five new teachers have joined the staff since September 2012. Three teachers are at the start of their teaching career.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on recent improvements in teaching and thereby raise pupils' achievements in mathematics, by ensuring that all staff:
  - set more demanding work in mathematics lessons for those pupils who are more able
  - give pupils regular opportunities to develop different approaches to problem solving
  - provide learning activities for pupils that enable them to use their mathematical skills when learning about other subjects.
- Improve the quality and consistency of marking by ensuring that teachers:
  - give pupils clear guidance, when marking their work, that lets them know what they need to do to improve and how their thinking might be developed
  - learn from and adopt the most effective marking practice which already exists in the school.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership by ensuring that leaders:
  - provide guidance for staff to strengthen their subject knowledge in mathematics
  - extend the skills of middle leaders in gaining a broader view of what is offered to pupils over time so that they are better informed to evaluate the effectiveness of their areas of responsibility and plan for improvement
  - establish more effective methods to keep parents and carers informed about how well their children are doing.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Attainment at the end of Year 6 is typically in line with the national average. Of the pupils who took the national tests in 2012, most made good progress during Key Stage 2 in English. However, not enough pupils made the progress expected of them in mathematics. Recent assessment information and work in pupils' books indicate that almost all pupils currently at the school are making progress at a faster rate than before because of better teaching. More pupils are working at higher levels. Even so, recent improvements have not yet been sustained over time to ensure that pupils' achievement in mathematics is good.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. They are supported in lessons and in small-group work by activities that help to fill specific gaps in their knowledge and skills. These pupils are benefiting from a range of recent initiatives, including one-to-one tuition, so that their particular needs can be met more precisely.
- Children join the Nursery with skills and abilities that are below those expected for their age. Adults provide a range of opportunities that enable children to develop new skills. Although they remain below expected levels at the end of their Nursery Year, their skills are closer to where they should be for their age. Similarly, children in the Reception class get off to a sound start and, although varying from year to year, reach broadly average levels by the time they enter Year 1.
- Pupils do best in reading. Attainment is improving because young children are taught about letters and the sounds they make regularly and systematically. The teaching of specific reading skills continues into Key Stages 1 and 2. In 2012, a higher-than-average proportion of pupils met the required standards in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1.
- Overall, pupils new to English and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress to reach above average levels. Adults provide good language role models. They reinforce and support pupils' understanding of new words and phrases.
- Additional funding received by the school in the form of the pupil premium is being used effectively to provide one-to-one tuition, small-group work, music tuition and access to clubs and educational visits. By the time these pupils leave the school in Year 6, they are, on average, about a term ahead of their classmates in English and a term behind in mathematics.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The teaching in the past has not ensured that all pupils consistently make good progress and, therefore, requires improvement. Occasionally, weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics reinforce common errors and lead to misunderstanding.
- Opportunities for pupils to apply their understanding of mathematics in investigative problem-solving approaches are limited, although they regularly use the mathematical ideas they have learned in 'Big Maths' to solve word problems in the form of questions or statements. Pupils are encouraged to use their English skills when learning about other subjects. However, there are too few opportunities for similar working in mathematics.
- On the whole, teachers plan activities that match pupils' different needs and abilities. In some mathematics lessons, the work that is set for pupils, particularly those that are more able, is

insufficiently challenging and they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

- The quality of teachers' marking in pupils' English and mathematics books is variable. There are good examples in some classes of how teachers' comments help pupils to move forward in their learning. However, not all teachers' marking provides pupils with clear and precise feedback about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers have high expectations of learning. Teachers provide interesting, practical tasks that are carefully planned. In Year 2, for example, pupils carried out a 'fair' test in science by testing how far a model car travelled by adjusting the height of a ramp and drew conclusions about their findings. On such occasions, learning proceeds at a brisk pace.
- In all lessons, pupils enjoy good relationships with adults and with each other. Pupils are regularly praised for their contributions to class discussions. Teachers' use of 'talk partners' enables pupils to share their ideas. Computer technology is used well to engage pupils and helps to maintain their interest. One such example involved pupils in Year 4 using tablet computers to research the locations of landmarks in geography.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a good balance of activities led by adults and those that children choose for themselves. Children play enthusiastically in small groups together; they learn how to share and take turns. For example, their counting skills developed well as they hunted for 'buried treasure' in the garden and compared how many coins each had unearthed.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Pupils say they enjoy everything about school. Their attendance, low at the time of the previous inspection, has improved in three successive years to reach above-average levels.
- Pupils in Year 6 particularly appreciate the responsibilities they are given in carrying out various roles and say that this helps them learn useful life skills. Class 'ambassadors' meet and greet visitors warmly. In discussion, all pupils show that they are very proud of their school. The breakfast and after-school clubs provide pupils with good opportunities to enjoy playing games together and to develop social skills.
- Typically, pupils' behaviour is good in and around the school. They are polite, courteous and respectful to adults. The vast majority demonstrate positive attitudes to learning in lessons and are keen to learn, especially when teachers plan interesting, practical activities. On rare occasions, a few pupils show low-level disruptive behaviour, limiting their progress.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and well cared for at school. They report very rare incidents of bullying, such as name-calling, but are confident that, in raising their concerns with the staff, issues will be quickly dealt with. Pupils are provided with a range of activities which enable them to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- The headteacher has focused on strengthening the skills of those in charge of subjects and other key areas of the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage. Not all, however, have a broad enough view of how effective their practice is over time. Consequently, they are not as well informed as they could be in making decisions about the areas they are responsible for.

- Close working with families and a more rigorous approach to implementing policies and procedures have ensured that attendance is now above average. A majority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire and who spoke to inspectors are positive about the work of the school. However, a small minority say that they do not receive enough information about how well their children are doing.
- The headteacher, supported by the governing body, has successfully addressed weaknesses in teaching although the mathematics subject leader recognises that there is more to do to strengthen the teaching of mathematics.
- In the last year, there have been significant changes to key leadership roles and to the teaching staff. All teachers are observed by leaders and given feedback and training which help them develop their skills. Those new to teaching are supported by more experienced colleagues. As a result, teaching is improving. There is evidence that rates of pupils' progress are increasing, indicating the school's capacity to secure further improvement.
- Leaders take appropriate action to promote equality of opportunity and tackle any form of discrimination. The headteacher meets regularly with staff to check on pupils' progress and to provide those who need extra help with the support they need.
- The school offers its pupils a range of subjects, enhanced by visitors and educational trips. Strong partnerships with the church and a local group of schools support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to participate in joint sporting events and to appreciate art and music. This enables them to meet and make new friends from different backgrounds.
- The local authority has provided effective support to the school's leaders in managing improvements to teaching and through regular reviews of its performance.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have provided good support to the headteacher in tackling weak teaching and regularly check that it continues to improve. They are knowledgeable about how well pupils do in different subjects and year groups compared to all pupils nationally. Governors regularly look closely at the assessment information provided by the headteacher and challenge leaders on what they are doing to raise pupils' achievement, particularly in mathematics. Governors make regular visits to school and are involved in planning improvement approaches. They oversee the performance of the headteacher and work alongside her to ensure that only those teachers who achieve their goals are rewarded and move appropriately through the pay scales. Governors manage the school's finances well including the spending of the pupil premium funding to make certain that the extra money is spent in the best interests of the children.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103993
<b>Local authority</b>	Sandwell
<b>Inspection number</b>	400678

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	247
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Piddock
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kathryn Hill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 May 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 5053595
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