

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Swires Road, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX1 2ER

Inspection dates 22–23 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	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 has improved significantly from satisfactory to good since the previous inspection. From their below average starting points, pupils make good progress throughout the school so that by the end of Year 6 their attainment is broadly average.
- The quality of teaching is good overall and some lessons are outstanding. Lessons are interesting and provide opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their own learning.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. They say that they feel safe in school and are cared for well. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance reflects this.
- The headteacher leads the school very effectively. He is highly ambitious and has been the driving force behind the school's improvement, particularly in raising pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- The governing body is supportive of the school and fully involved in ensuring this is an improving school.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has a high priority in school and this results in relationships being strong at all levels.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' achievement is not yet outstanding. This is because teaching is not yet consistently strong enough to secure outstanding progress.
- While attainment in writing is similar to that in other subjects, the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress is not consistently high. Pupils do not always have enough opportunities to extend their skills in other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons, including two joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors looked at pupils' workbooks, listened to a number of pupils read and examined displays around the school.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders and pupils. A representative of the local authority and an independent consultant also spoke with one of the inspectors.
- A number of school documents were examined including those relating to safeguarding, records of meetings of the governing body, assessment information and curriculum planning. Records showing how the pupil premium and the new Primary School Sport funding were spent were analysed.
- Account was taken of 19 Ofsted's staff questionnaires and communication from parents, including 77 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Barbara Martin, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Melyvn Hemmings

Additional Inspector

Faheem Chishti

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly larger than the average size primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is slightly below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above the average, as is the proportion of pupils whose first language is believed not to be English.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, which provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those who are looked after by the local authority, is lower than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - sharing the existing best practice within the school, and observing outstanding teaching in other schools
 - ensuring that all lessons go at a brisk pace and include opportunities for pupils to work independently.
- Increase pupils' progress and raise their attainment in writing further by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils across the school to practise their writing skills and to extend their vocabulary
 - providing pupils with time to reflect and respond to teachers' marking so that they learn how to make their work better.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils achieve well from their individual starting points, which are generally below that typical for their age when they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most pupils make good progress and their attainment is broadly average in reading writing and mathematics by the time they leave at the end of Year 6.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation achieve well especially because of the good teaching they receive and the opportunities they have in a variety of activities from which they can choose, to learn through play.
- When pupils leave the Reception class they enter Year 1 with attainment just below average standards. They continue to enjoy their learning in Key Stage 1 and attainment at the end of Year 2 is broadly average.
- Good progress continues in Key Stage 2 so that by the time the pupils leave at the end of Year 6, their attainment in English and mathematics is broadly in line with national expectations.
- Unvalidated national test results in 2013 demonstrate significant improvements in pupils' attainment as a result of improved teaching. The proportion of pupils making expected progress was above the national average. More pupils make greater than expected progress in reading and mathematics than they do in writing.
- Pupils' attainment in mathematics has rapidly improved because of the initiatives senior leaders have put in place. Teaching is more effective because in some year groups pupils are taught in ability groups. Teachers now match work more closely to pupils' needs. The introduction of a new mathematics scheme of work is helping teachers to build more closely on skills from one year to the next.
- In 2012, the large majority of pupils met the standard in the end of Year 1 assessment of their knowledge of letters and their sounds (phonics) and in the following year the results were even higher. This improvement is linked to successful teaching of phonics. Teachers ensure pupils apply their skills well to read new words. As a result, pupils make good gains in their reading and as a consequence, they are able to read with fluency and understanding by the time they leave school in Year 6.
- Attainment in writing is similar to the other subjects but not as many pupils make more than the expected progress. Pupils' basic literacy skills are not always secure. Teachers do not always give the pupils enough time in some lessons to write extensively and correct mistakes in their writing.
- Those pupils who have special educational needs make good progress and achieve well because of the targeted support they receive to meet their specific needs.
- Minority ethnic pupils and those pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Their needs are fully met and progress accelerates as they gain a better understanding of the English language. This reflects the effective promotion of equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- More able pupils make good progress overall and respond well when teachers provide challenging activities that extend and develop their understanding.
- As a result of additional targeted support, pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium are achieving well. This group includes those known to be eligible for free school meals. The gap is closing between these pupils who are eligible for free school meals and their peers in school who are not and against national scores.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Teaching is good and has been sustained over time to ensure pupils make good progress and their attainment has risen in all subjects. There is a small amount of outstanding teaching and a minority requires improvement. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff work well together to meet the needs of the children in order to develop their language, number and social skills. For example, children were observed enjoying tracing the number eight in foam and making models of spiders, after they had helped each other count eight pipe cleaners for their spiders' legs.
- In the most effective lessons, pupils are motivated and involved by work which interests them. There is a buzz of excitement, such as, in Years 1 and 2 when pupils were using magnifying glasses to hunt for sentences around the classroom and in a Year 6 lesson, where pupils were using drama to help them with writing diary extracts about the Trojan War.
- In these lessons, teachers have high expectations, good subject knowledge, and use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding so that they can intervene if necessary. Good use is made of audio, visual and other information and communication technology (ICT) equipment to make sure pupils learn well. Pupils are clear about what they are learning and what they have to do to achieve their learning targets. Where possible the content of these lessons have some relevance to their everyday lives. For example, in a Year 6 lesson the teacher showed a video clip of a weather report which demonstrated how useful graphs can be in helping to give information clearly.
- The additional support that teachers and teaching assistants give to pupils with special educational needs in small groups is particularly effective. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language are also supported well. The learning mentors also provide excellent support for those pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. Their work has an extremely beneficial impact on attainment and the development of social skills for these pupils.
- Where teaching is not yet as effective, the pace of the lesson is slower and pupils wait longer before they begin their independent work. Although overall writing is taught well, teachers do not always give pupils the time to write at length independently and to respond to comments from teachers in their work books.
- A very large majority of parents who responded to Parent View believe their children are well taught.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**is good**

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Records over time indicate a similar picture with no exclusions, racist comments or recent incidents of bullying.
- Pupils are polite and respectful to adults and other pupils. They are consistently kind and considerate to each other.
- A visitor in school at the time of the inspection commented that she was always made to feel welcome by the pupils and that their behaviour was always good.
- Pupils sensibly join in various activities during break times in the playground. They clearly get along with each other and this is also demonstrated in the way they work collaboratively together in small groups in the classroom.
- When pupils were asked if they enjoyed coming to school a typical comment was, 'We definitely do.' Pupils say that there is no bullying in school and that everyone gets along with each other.
- In discussions with pupils they said that they are well looked after and feel safe in school. Pupils have a good awareness of safety issues and of the various forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying.
- As a consequence of the school giving a high priority to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils know the difference between right and wrong and have a good understanding of cultures and religions other than their own. Pupils say that it is, 'nice having different cultures, because we can all learn about each other.'
- The vast majority of parents, who responded to Parent View, agree that their children behave

well in school and feel safe.

The leadership and management is good

- The school has improved from satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection to now being good, as a result of the headteacher's drive to accelerate pupils' achievement. Much has been achieved and with strong support from other leaders, governors and all staff the school is well placed to improve even further.
- The checks made on the quality of teaching are more rigorous. Middle leaders have developed their leadership skills and this has enabled them to make a strong contribution to school improvement and to the quality of teaching. Only a few aspects to improve teaching remain to be resolved. However, the best practice is not consistently shared across the school.
- The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective in ensuring that children have a good start to their school life.
- Procedures for tracking and analysing pupils' progress are now firmly in place and as a result, those pupils who are underachieving are identified early and targeted support is put in place. This has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement and attainment.
- The senior leaders' view of the school's performance is accurate and it provides a clear view of the strengths of the school and what more needs to be done. They have plans in place to address areas of weakness already identified, such as writing. Improvement is more evident in mathematics with successful changes both to teaching and the curriculum.
- The curriculum is imaginative and meets pupils' needs. Basic skills are extended across other subjects, although opportunities for pupils to be involved in extended writing are not always provided.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in lessons and in assemblies. For example, pupils are given opportunities for reflection and for sharing their views and beliefs.
- The senior leaders have benefited from the local authority working with them to enhance their skills in analysis, especially with the data that tracks pupils' progress.
- A very large majority of parents say that the school is well led and managed and that they would recommend this school to other parents.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors meet regularly and fulfil their statutory duties and check on the school's performance highly efficiently, including the school's safeguarding arrangements which meet requirements.
 - They are well informed about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement and challenge senior leaders well, helping them shape the direction of the school.
 - Governors analyse data on pupils' performance and use this to ask searching questions about the quality of teaching and the progress that all pupils make.
 - They have a clear overview of the systems for performance management and link the quality of teaching to increases in salary.
 - Governors have a say in how the pupil premium funding is used and check that these funds are improving progress and that gaps in attainment between these pupils and those of their peers are closing. The Primary School Sport funding is used to introduce additional provision to the school, such as coaches to work alongside teachers, in order to increase their skills in teaching physical education.
 - Pupils state, 'We pretty much do every sport.' This extra provision is making healthy lifestyles and achievement in sport possible.

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	107546
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	429494

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	284
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Mgr David Smith
Headteacher	Mr Mark Brennan
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2012
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