

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Aston-le-Walls

Main Street, Aston-le-Walls, Daventry, NN11 6UF

Inspection dates 14–15 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Children in Reception get off to a good start to their school life and achieve well.
- Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and attainment by the end of Year 6 is usually well above average in reading, writing and mathematics
- Pupils are well taught. There are examples of outstanding practice.
- Teachers use explanations and questioning well to promote good learning.
- Pupils know how well they are doing and know how to improve their learning.
- The headteacher and staff have created a caring, positive and welcoming place for pupils to learn and develop.
- Most pupils are enthusiastic and excited about their learning
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. In Years 5 and 6, attitudes to learning and their behaviour are often exemplary.
- There are highly effective procedures to ensure pupils are safe and secure. Pupils feel safe and very well cared for by staff.
- Pupils thrive on the numerous additional responsibilities they are given.
- There is a good range of additional activities offered, with music being a particular strength.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership in promoting good achievement for pupils and developing teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, pupils are not given tasks to do which are sufficiently stimulating and engaging, and their rate of learning slows.
- Adult support is not always used well enough, especially at the start of lessons.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in 11 lessons.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, a representative from the local authority, two external advisers, governors, parents and carers, and pupils.
- The inspector took account of the 40 responses to the online survey (Parent View).
- Pupils were heard to read and discussions were held with them about their reading.
- Questionnaires from 11 members of staff were analysed.
- The inspector examined school policies, information about pupils' attainment and progress, teachers' plans, pupils' work, safeguarding procedures and the school's improvement planning.

Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is much smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Most of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Very few pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and other groups.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Recently, the school was awarded the Primary Science Quality Mark, level gold.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by making sure that:
 - teachers set tasks which are at the right level of difficulty for pupils so that they are challenged and engaged in their learning
 - the skills of additional adults in classes are used to best effect so that they make the maximum contribution to pupils' learning in all lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of pupils are achieving well. They make good progress from their starting points and, by the end of Year 6, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is usually well above average.
- Children start in the Reception Year with knowledge and skills expected for their age. They make good progress in all the areas of learning because of good teaching and the interesting range of activities provided.
- Throughout the school, the most-able pupils benefit from work that challenges them. As a result, an above-average proportion reach the higher levels by the end of Year 6. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make good progress.
- In 2013, Year 2 and Year 6 did not have any pupils supported by the pupil premium. The very few pupils in the school eligible for the funding receive additional adult support. This, with good teaching, helps them to make good progress in literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening because teachers provide well-planned opportunities for them to discuss their learning and present their ideas to the class. By Year 6, pupils are articulate and confident speakers.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to reading. The good support from home contributes to their good progress. Pupils benefit from a regular and structured programme in the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). An above-average proportion of pupils met or exceeded the expected standards in the Year 1 phonics check in 2013. Older pupils use their reading skills competently in finding out useful information in a range of topics.
- In a successful cooking session, Year 1 and 2 pupils applied their literacy and numeracy skills, as well as developing cooking techniques. They followed clear instructions and took accurate measurements in making milk shakes, salsa and chocolate krispies.
- In science, the same class applied measuring skills well as they investigated whether taller people had bigger feet than shorter people. They measured accurately and recorded their results clearly using the correct units and symbols. They compared measurements and communicated their findings.
- Pupils make good progress in writing. They write for a range of purposes and apply their writing skills in range of subjects. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 wrote accurate accounts of the processes in recycling of aluminium. In Year 4, pupils' writing came to life as they wrote a letter to Henry VIII in role as Catherine of Aragon. Pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling are accurate. Effective action is being taken to improve inconsistencies in pupils' handwriting and presentation.
- In mathematics, pupils make good progress. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 quickly acquired the skill of rounding numbers up and down. A Year 5 group accurately positioned a range of fractions on a number line.
- In all year groups, pupils are making good gains in their scientific knowledge and

understanding. They are acquiring science skills well and apply these effectively in problem solving and investigations.

- Pupils are achieving well in music. Over half of those in Years 3 to 6 learn to play a musical instrument and perform in the school's orchestra. Singing is also a strength, with the choir performing in the local community and at a major venue in Birmingham.
- Pupils are developing healthy lifestyles and physical fitness through the school's physical education programme and the additional sporting activities on offer. Pupils participate well in football, netball and rugby clubs.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Good teaching contributes to pupils' good progress and the well above-average attainment by the end of Year 6. There are examples of outstanding teaching and learning.
- In a highly successful mathematics lesson, pupils in Years 5 and 6 made rapid progress in multiplying decimals. They were motivated by the teacher's enthusiasm and strong subject knowledge. Questioning was used skilfully to challenge pupils' thinking and to check their understanding of place value and multiplication. Pupils were keen to tackle the challenging problems set. They were fully engaged, productive and worked at a good pace.
- In the Reception class, children are provided with a range of indoor and outdoor activities that is made interesting for them. There is a good blend of adult-led activities and those chosen by the children. Children are given very clear instruction and guidance in early reading, writing and numeracy skills. Good opportunities are provided for children to explore, be creative and learn on their own.
- Teachers ensure that the purpose of the lesson is clearly shared with the pupils. As a result, the pupils know what they are expected to learn. Pupils learn well because teachers give them clear explanations and instructions.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for discussion and use questioning well to check pupils' understanding of new learning. Reading skills are taught through a well-structured programme. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in a range of subjects.
- In the main, teachers check pupils' attainment accurately and use this information to plan their teaching and provide interesting tasks which challenge and engage the pupils. As a result, pupils make good gains in acquiring knowledge and deepening their understanding.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well and are usually well supported by teaching assistants.
- Teachers set clear individual learning targets to guide pupils' learning in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils know how well they are doing and know how to improve. Pupils find teachers' marking and oral feedback useful. They are pleased with the new marking system. Marking acknowledges good work and provides clear pointers for improvement. One Year 5 pupil said of her teacher's marking, 'It provides constructive criticism.'
- Occasionally, teaching and tasks are not sufficiently stimulating to fully engage the pupils and their learning is adversely affected. For example, sometimes pupils spend too long on work

which is too easy for them.

- In most lessons, teaching assistants and other adult helpers are used well to guide and support pupils' learning. However, there are times where this adult support is not fully utilised, particularly at the beginning of lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are well behaved at St Mary's. Children in the Reception settle quickly into the school because of the strong relationships that adults form with children. They thoroughly enjoy the learning activities provided. Children behave well in the classrooms and the outdoor areas.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6, show enthusiasm and excitement for learning. Their behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. In the Year 5 and Year 6 classes, pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are often exemplary.
- Pupils are courteous, friendly and considerate of others. The school provides a wide range of additional responsibilities, particularly for the oldest pupils. Pupils take their roles seriously as young leaders, road safety officers, prefects, eco committee members, head girl, head boy and school councillors. Pupils have recently raised considerable sums of money for local, national and international charities.
- The parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, were very positive that their children were happy at school, felt safe and were well looked after. These views reflect the findings of the inspection.
- The school's procedures to ensure that pupils are safe and secure are outstanding. Procedures are clear, robust and consistently implemented by all staff. Governors check safeguarding carefully and on a regular basis. Discussions with pupils show that they have a clear understanding of bullying and its different forms, including persistent name-calling and cyber-bullying. All the pupils spoken to stated that there was no bullying in the school. They also assured the inspector that any inappropriate behaviour was swiftly dealt with by staff.
- Parents support their children well and pupils enjoy their learning and coming to school. As a result, attendance is consistently above average.
- The school's records show that incidents of poor behaviour are very rare. Occasionally, pupils' attitudes and their behaviour are less positive when learning tasks are not sufficiently stimulating to fully engage them.

The leadership and management are good

- An established and experienced headteacher provides strong leadership and clear educational direction for the school. She and the staff successfully promote good achievement and good-quality teaching for pupils.
- The school has a very positive, safe and welcoming school atmosphere where all pupils can learn and thrive. The headteacher and staff are particularly successful in promoting a sense of care and responsibility among the pupils.
- The expertise of staff is used well and subject responsibilities are effectively distributed between

a small number of teachers. All leaders are appropriately engaged in checking performance and improving their areas of responsibility.

- Leaders have a clear overview of the school's strengths and improvement points. The findings of self-review are used well to inform planning and action to bring about improvements.
- The quality of teaching and learning is regularly checked by the headteacher and an external adviser. The school has a clear system for the appraisal of staff performance. Targets to improve teachers' practice and skills are clearly identified. Appropriate support and training are provided where needed.
- The local authority has a good knowledge of the school's performance. The school has performed well over the years and so little support has been needed from the local authority. However, the headteacher is confident that local authority support is available if required. The school enlists external advisers well to help review the school's performance.
- The curriculum provides an interesting range of learning activities to promote good achievement and good personal development for pupils. Additional activities, clubs and visits are much appreciated by the pupils. Provision for music is particularly strong. There are no signs of discrimination in the school and all pupils have access to the full range of activities provided.
- The recently allocated primary sports funding has been used well to extend pupils' physical and sporting activities. Physical education specialists and coaches are used well to extend the skills of teachers at St Mary's.
- Pupil premium funding has been properly allocated and used to increase the progress of eligible pupils. The funding is used to provide specific adult support and additional learning resources.
- There was a good response from parents and carers to the online survey, Parent View. The results show that the vast majority of parents are pleased with the care and education provided for their children.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are enthusiastic and bring a broad range of expertise and skills to support the school. Governors show a clear understanding of pupils' attainment and progress. They are kept well informed about the quality of teaching by the headteacher and an external adviser. The governors have a good understanding of the school's performance management arrangements and ensure that promotion and pay awards are based on the progress that pupils' make. They know how the pupil premium is spent and check the impact of this funding on the progress of pupils eligible for it. Governors have attended a range of useful training to support them in their role. The governors' good knowledge of the school's performance enables them to constructively challenge the headteacher and hold the school to account. The governing body ensures that arrangements for pupils' safeguarding meet current regulatory requirements.

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	122040
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	431224

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	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Alford
Headteacher	Janice Hamilton
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2009
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