

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Church Road, Thornbury, Bristol, BS35 1HJ

Inspection dates

4–5 February 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership and management | | Outstanding | 1 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The appointment of a new headteacher and a change in the leadership of the governing body, that both occurred in September 2012, have transformed the school. It is now both ambitious and performing at a high level.
- Children make an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage; they quickly develop important numeracy and literacy skills. They also learn to concentrate on their tasks and develop positive relationships with one another and adults.
- Pupils' attainment has improved since the previous inspection so that it is consistently well above average in both English and mathematics at all ages, including at the end of Key Stage 2. The strong support and challenge offered to all groups, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, ensure that the achievement of all pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are calm, courteous and keen to learn. Behaviour is excellent and bullying almost unknown. Pupils have a firm grasp of how to stay safe at school and in their everyday lives.
- Outstanding teaching ensures that rapid progress in lessons is the norm. Teachers plan carefully and set very high expectations. They show great expertise, question pupils perceptively and promote a positive atmosphere for learning. They make excellent use of marking and target setting and this helps pupils know what to do to improve.
- School leaders rigorously check on teaching by visiting lessons and analysing assessment data. This enables them to challenge less effective performance and promote the best possible practice, driving teachers' and pupils' performance forward rapidly.
- The governing body is innovative in its comprehensive checks on the school. Working with school leaders, it has developed ambitious plans for the future that are having a major impact by further improving the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 13 lessons taught by nine teachers and undertook four joint observations with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with pupils, teachers, the headteacher, parents and carers, representatives of the governing body and a local authority officer.
- The inspectors examined numerous school documents, including policies, assessment information, planning documents and records of all kinds.
- The views of 44 parents were analysed through the Parent View website.

Inspection team

John Carnaghan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fiona Robinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The present headteacher took up his post in September 2012.
- Only a very small number of pupils are supported through the pupil premium (additional funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families).
- Less than one tenth of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, this is below the national average. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further, so that more lessons are outstanding, by encouraging a brisk pace at all times so pupils' learning never flags.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children enter the Reception Year with skills and aptitudes that are similar to those typical for their age. Excellent teaching and well-planned activities enable them to settle quickly into school life. They experience a good mixture of teacher-led and child-initiated activities and enjoy taking part in activities, inside and out.
- In consequence, children make rapid progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, developing important numeracy and literacy skills and making very good strides in their personal development. For example, they show extremely positive attitudes to learning, listen well to adults and their friends, and learn to work alone and together. These factors mean children are very well prepared to start on the National Curriculum in Year 1.
- Attainment in English and mathematics has been above average for a number of years. Improvements in teaching have enabled the school to raise standards even further in the last year, so a large proportion of pupils reach above average levels in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6 national assessments. Challenging teaching, that keeps all groups working at full stretch, ensures the most able pupils reach well above average attainment levels in national assessments. Given their starting points, this represents outstanding achievement in English and mathematics for all groups of pupils.
- Reading attainment has, historically, lagged a little behind other areas, although the Year 1 phonics check indicates that it has been above average in recent years. The school reacted very energetically to this challenge. Guided reading is now planned in greater depth and more thorough records are kept of progress, with additional help offered to individuals as required. This has transformed reading standards. Pupils are confident and fluent readers who, even from a young age, experience a variety of texts. Attainment in reading is now as high as it is in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in lessons, partly because they are such keen participants in their own learning. An excellent Year 6 lesson on conjunctions was typical. The teacher was very careful to set out the objectives at the start, closely relating these to National Curriculum levels. It was clear to all pupils that her expectations were very high. Through a well-structured mix of activities, very effective questioning and considerable efforts from the pupils, progress was excellent.
- The careful use of assessment information helps the school quickly establish which pupils need additional help. Individual needs are well known and teachers select from a range of additional activities to support those having difficulties. Well-trained and committed teaching assistants play a significant role so that the progress of all groups, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, is equally good. This helps to ensure that the school provides equality of opportunity and that there is no discrimination.
- The school has an extremely small number of pupils who receive the additional funding afforded by the pupil premium. Needs are met on an individual level and the degree of care and assistance provided ensures equality of achievement. Because of this small number, it is not possible to comment on gaps in attainment or whether they are closing.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is of a consistently high quality because the school checks very carefully on each teacher's performance in the classroom, promotes best practice and immediately acts to eliminate any weaknesses. As a result, while teachers' personalities naturally lead to different characteristics of lessons, they also share many fundamentally effective qualities.
- Teachers plan in great detail, using assessment information most carefully, so that pupils are fully challenged and, where required, receive the right kind of support. This fully addresses criticisms made in the previous inspection.

- Teachers set precise goals for pupils at the start of the lesson that embody high expectations and challenging work, often beyond what is expected for pupils' age; these underpin good and often excellent progress in lessons. Staff remind pupils of their aims throughout the session and then carefully review how successful the lesson has been with pupils at the end.
- Marking is excellent; it is analytical and frequently offers friendly advice to pupils about the best way to improve their work and, as a result, pupils are able to make further progress. Pupils are well aware of their targets because they have target books that are regularly consulted and updated. Teachers refer to these in lessons, explaining carefully how pupils' standards relate to National Curriculum levels.
- Teachers show considerable subject expertise and this makes them confident in the classroom and inspires trust from their pupils. They increasingly plan to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and computing skills in other subjects to further boost progress in these areas.
- Teaching assistants know individual pupils and their needs very well. They have received appropriate training so are confident in helping pupils in small groups or individually. In many cases, their interventions are short term as pupils overcome their issues and are returned to the main class.
- The way teachers manage pupils is subtle, but effective, fostering good relationships. Pupils are excellent listeners and quickly respond to instructions. In the Reception class they learn to show respect to one another and their staff and are, in turn, treated with great courtesy. This continues throughout pupils' school careers, to the benefit of their learning.
- An outstanding Year 4 religious education lesson exemplified many of the strengths that are typical in teaching. At the outset the teacher made the objectives for the lesson crystal clear and these strongly motivated pupils. Perceptive questioning about offering advice to others challenged pupils to think for themselves and express their views lucidly. In this safe and caring environment, pupils' spiritual, moral and social development was excellent and the pupils concluded the session by producing mature and well-reasoned writing.
- Lessons begin promptly and have a purposeful atmosphere. On some occasions, however, learning would benefit from tight deadlines for tasks and a greater sense of urgency from the teacher.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They show exceptionally positive attitudes to learning across all key stages and with all staff. Disruption to lessons through bad behaviour is very rare; this helps promote strong progress in all lessons.
- Pupils demonstrate a love of learning and a strong desire to tackle tasks, whether working as a whole class, in groups, pairs or individually. They are quick to settle down and act promptly and sensibly on teachers' instructions. This has a very strong impact on accelerating their progress in lessons.
- Behaviour outside lessons is excellent. The playground, corridors and dining hall are notably harmonious places. Pupils' pride in their school is evident in their very good manners and enthusiasm for coming to school. Attendance has risen sharply in the last year and is now well above average.
- The few pupils who find it difficult to maintain good behaviour at all times benefit from very strong, sympathetic support. The firm, consistent way they are treated invariably produces positive outcomes, and school records indicate numerous successes in improving the attitudes and behaviour of individuals.
- Staff, parents and pupils are almost unanimous that behaviour is excellent. Bullying of all kinds is virtually unknown and pupils are confident that the school would address any such incidents promptly and effectively.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils report they feel very safe at school. They demonstrate a very clear understanding of making safe decisions and know how to keep themselves and others safe in a range of situations, such as when using the internet or

texting on mobile phones.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has brought about remarkable improvements to the school in his year and a half in post. Plans for the future are soundly based on research and provide a clear template for continuing improvement. This very effective school receives light touch support from the local authority. It has a strong capacity for continuing improvement.
- School leaders check very carefully to establish how well the school is performing. This underpins their actions in driving improvements. Assessment data are collected and recorded in a way that is accessible to all staff. Trends in the progress of each pupil are easily identified. This information then initiates additional support if pupils are in danger of falling behind, or extra challenges if they are forging ahead. This ensures consistent progress across all pupil groups.
- Assessment information also forms an element of checks made on teaching. Staff are regularly held to account for pupils' progress, they are offered extra help as required and given opportunities for additional training if that is deemed helpful. Regular lesson visits and checks on pupils' books have promoted the most effective classroom practice, have allowed teaching to flourish and created a remarkable consistency in its quality.
- Middle leaders are increasingly empowered to manage whole school issues. They have clear responsibilities and the headteacher provides the encouragement and training for them to fulfil their roles and play a full part in school improvement.
- Primary sport funding has been used to employ specialist expertise, providing classes in areas like dance where the school has, in the past, been less strong. Coaches also run popular after-school clubs that develop skills across a number of sports. Funding has also been used to introduce competitive sports meetings with local schools.
- The mix of subjects the school offers provides a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities. There is a variety of special events, such as a 'creative play' day. Lessons across all subjects are increasingly planned to help build pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Religious education has a high status in the school; its planning and assessment are of high quality and outcomes for pupils are very good. An interesting range of after-school clubs enriches pupils' experiences; music is particularly strong and the choir has been placed highly in national competitions.
- The school puts its vision of values into practice and carefully provides opportunities for pupils to reflect on concepts, such as putting others before yourself. Spiritual values are embedded in school life and this manifests itself in pupils' caring and sensitive attitudes towards one another. Exceptionally warm relationships also speak of pupils' strong moral and social development. The school's schemes of work provide numerous opportunities for pupils to consider other cultures and their values.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The breadth of understanding of the governing body enables members to make a very full contribution towards supporting and challenging the school. This dynamically led group runs frequent checks to keep its members up to date with the school's performance. Members have a firm grasp of assessment data and where national results place the school in comparison with others. They know about the performance of groups, including the very few who receive pupil premium funding, and know that the school's expenditure in this area provides good value for money. Governors understand the strengths of teaching in the school and are aware of the links between teachers' performance and their pay progression. An audit of governors' skills has identified where the governing body is strong and where gaps need to be plugged; governor training is addressing the few shortfalls. A governor trawl of the views of stakeholders has informed the school development plan, known as the 5 year vision plan, so that it provides a very firm basis for moving forwards. Rigorous checks on the school's safety underpin the school's work in meeting all of its safeguarding requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 109263 |
| Local authority | South Gloucestershire |
| Inspection number | 431101 |

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

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| 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 | 157 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Claire Clarke |
| Headteacher | Karl Joyce |
| Date of previous school inspection | 22–23 March 2012 |
| Telephone number | 01454 866760 |
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