

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Dellsome Lane, North Mymms, Hatfield, AL9 7NF

Inspection dates 3–4 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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

- Not enough pupils make good progress, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Too few pupils reach the higher levels of attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.
- The most able pupils are not always given work which is hard enough to help them reach the higher levels of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not always check how well pupils are learning in lessons. As a result, they do not adapt tasks to make sure they are at the right level of difficulty.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough to enable all pupils to make good progress.
- Teachers' marking is not always helpful in raising standards throughout the school. Some comments made by teachers do not show pupils how to improve their work.
- Subject leaders are not yet having sufficient impact on raising standards in their area of responsibility.
- Until recently governors have not received enough accurate information to hold the school to account.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils behave well and have a positive attitude towards school. They feel safe and get on well together.
- The new headteacher has a good understanding of how to improve the school. Achievement is beginning to rise due to recent improvements in teaching.
- Improved teaching of the sounds that letters make and more frequent opportunities for pupils to read have raised standards in reading.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 lessons, nine of which were seen together with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector spoke to pupils about their views of the school, listened to them read and scrutinised the work in their books.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents including the school's own evaluation of its performance, plans for improvement, policies and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, and information relating to safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- There were not enough responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for them to be displayed. However, the inspector took account of responses to the school's own parent questionnaire and also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.
- The inspector considered the responses from 19 staff to Ofsted's questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lucy Maughan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority) is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- There have been a number of staff changes since the last inspection. The headteacher was appointed in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - give pupils work that is challenging but suitably matched to their ability levels, particularly for the most able pupils
 - give clear guidance, particularly through marking, on how pupils can improve their work
 - assess pupils' learning carefully in lessons, and adapt tasks when necessary to make sure they are not too hard or too easy.
- Improve achievement in writing and mathematics by giving pupils:
 - more opportunities to write at length in different subjects
 - more practice in applying number skills to calculations and problem solving activities.
- Strengthen leadership and management by making subject leaders fully accountable for raising standards in their areas of responsibility.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In Key Stages 1 and 2, too few pupils make good progress. Progress between year groups and among groups of pupils is not yet consistently good. Not enough pupils reach the higher levels of attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 because teachers do not always set work that is challenging enough for these pupils.
- Pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 has been too variable in the last few years and standards slipped below average in reading, writing and mathematics last year. Current school data shows that pupils are now making the progress expected of them. As a result, standards have improved, particularly in reading, and are now similar to the national average.
- Standards in reading have risen in both key stages. A sharper focus on teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) has resulted in a higher proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 check of their knowledge. In addition, older pupils now have a wide range of books to choose from and more opportunities to read them.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were broadly average last year. However, not enough pupils, particularly the most able, made good progress in order to reach the higher levels of attainment. Currently, more pupils are making faster progress. However, progress is not yet good in writing and mathematics because pupils have too few opportunities to write at length in different subjects or to apply their mathematical skill to solving problems.
- Attainment on entry to Early Years Foundation Stage varies from year to year, with children entering the current Reception class with skills and knowledge broadly in line with those expected for their age. The children make good progress and, by the end of the year, most have acquired the skills, knowledge and understanding expected for their age when they move into Year 1.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who join school speaking English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates.
- Over time, pupils supported by the pupil premium are making at least the same progress as, and in some cases better progress than those who do not receive this support. There were too few eligible pupils in Year 6 in 2013 to comment on their attainment in English and mathematics without risk of identifying individuals.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the progress expected of them from their different starting points. The school works to promote equal opportunities for these pupils to succeed by providing appropriate and well-targeted additional help.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The work set by teachers does not always challenge pupils, particularly the most able pupils. Pupils' work shows that teaching has not been good enough to promote consistently good progress over time, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Not all staff respond swiftly enough to how well pupils are learning in lessons. This means that teachers do not adapt activities to ensure pupils make good progress. In mathematics, pupils are sometimes asked to repeat examples of calculations when they have clearly understood the

work and are ready to move on.

- Although there are examples of effective marking it is too variable across different subjects and year groups. Some of the marking, of the pupils' work, does not give them a clear enough understanding of what they need to do next so that they can improve.
- Teachers make lessons interesting for pupils but do not give them enough opportunities to use the skills they learn in literacy and mathematics lessons in other subjects. As a result, progress in writing and mathematics is not as rapid as it should be.
- Teaching assistants know when to intervene to give disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs support and when to encourage them to try harder to solve problems themselves. These pupils receive effective support both one-to-one and in small groups so that they make the progress expected of them from their starting points.
- Teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children learn through exciting, purposeful activities to develop their skills, particularly in language development. For example, children were mixing potions and were able to talk about how they had made them and the spells they would produce.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There is a welcoming atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils are polite, courteous and get on well with each other and adults. They enjoy school and are keen to learn.
- Teachers and teaching assistants establish very good relationships with their classes and manage pupils' behaviour effectively.
- All members of the school community describe behaviour as good. These views match the inspector's observations of the pupils' behaviour during the school day.
- When work is not demanding enough for some pupils their interest can wane and their pace of learning slows down. Even in such cases, however, they continue to behave well and the learning of other pupils is not disrupted.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe and are confident that any bullying, should it occur, would be dealt with quickly.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They have sensible attitudes to risk-taking and are aware of how to keep safe when using the internet.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibilities and take their duties seriously, for example as helpers to the younger pupils and serving on the school council.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new headteacher is securing improvements in pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. However, the work of some other leaders, especially subject leaders, is not sufficiently influential to accelerate the rate of improvement.

- Subject leaders are not yet skilled enough at using the information available to them to make sure that the actions they are taking to accelerate the rate of pupils' progress are having the impact that is required to improve achievement. They are also not thorough enough in ensuring that the school's policies for marking and feedback are followed consistently by all teachers.
- The school's procedures for managing the performance of teachers are thorough. They are set clear individual targets, which are linked appropriately to the national *Teachers' Standards* and to expectations for pupils' progress. The headteacher makes regular checks on the quality of teaching and effective training is provided to improve the skills of teachers and teaching assistants. As a result teaching has improved, although the full impact of these improvements is yet to be seen in pupils' achievements.
- The curriculum includes a broad range of activities to enhance pupils' learning. Sporting and musical opportunities, such as taking part in the school drumming group, promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The academic curriculum is not as strong. Pupils have too few opportunities to develop their writing and mathematics skills in other subjects.
- The primary school sports funding is motivating pupils to take part in different sporting activities and competitions. In addition, the funding is being used to improve teaching of physical education through further staff training.
- The local authority has provided an increased level of support to the school within the last year, in particular providing leadership support in a number of areas in order to promote improvement in teaching.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have only recently started to receive accurate information about the achievement of pupils and the quality of teaching. As a result, the governing body is now better informed and knows what the school needs to do to improve further. The governors are now using the information they receive about the school in key areas, including pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, to evaluate its performance. They are now using the information to challenge leaders and to hold them to account. They oversee the spending of the pupil premium and sports funding and are aware of the impact it is having on pupils' achievement. The governing body also oversees decisions regarding teachers' pay, and make sure it closely reflects pupils' progress. They seek training to become more skilled and bring their own skills to their roles as governors. Governors support the school in all it does and are ambitious for it to improve further. They make sure safeguarding procedures meet 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	117497
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	444000

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	123
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Wootton
Headteacher	Vicky Humbles
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2009
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