

St Mary's Church of England Junior School

Swan Lane, Long Stratton, Norwich, NR15 2UY

Inspection dates

6–7 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although there have been improvements very recently, the governing body has not fulfilled well its strategic responsibility or its accountability role.
- Teachers do not always set work, for the most able pupils, that provides sufficient challenge to help them make the progress of which they are capable.
- The quality of teaching varies too much. School guidance is not always followed. For example, how to teach spelling is not yet well established in all classes.
- Standards in writing by the end of Year 6 are not as high as they should be. The progress pupils make in writing, throughout the school, is not fast enough to raise standards quickly.

The school has the following strengths

- The new school leadership team is providing good advice and guidance that is strengthening the quality of teaching.
- Recent improvements in reading are proving effective. As a result, standards are rising quickly.
- Many interesting and stimulating activities are provided to enrich and extend pupils' learning and personal development.
- Pupils behave well and the school is a harmonious community built on mutual respect. Pupils are keen to learn and to help one another.
- Pupils say they look forward to coming to school. As a result, attendance is high.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and well cared for. This view is supported by all parents responding to the on-line questionnaire.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 10 lessons, all with the headteacher or an assistant headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' workbooks and listened to pupils reading.
- Discussions were held with pupils, the headteacher, other staff, governors, parents and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 63 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, associated text comments and other parental views. The 35 responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.
- The inspectors looked at a number of documents including: the school's own information on pupils' progress; planning and monitoring documentation; the school's view of its own performance; records of how the school uses its funding, especially how the money from the pupil premium is spent; records relating to behaviour and attendance; minutes of meetings of the governing body and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Robert Greatrex, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ken Parry

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's Church of England Junior School converted to become an academy school in August 2011. When its predecessor school, of identical name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- This school is about average in size.
- Each year group is taught in two classes.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make up almost a quarter of the school population. This is well above the national average.
- One pupil in every five is eligible for support through the pupil premium (the extra government funding for pupils looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals). This is slightly below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics when they leave primary school.
- In the last two years, about half of the teachers are new to the school. The present leadership team was formed in April 2014 with the appointment of two assistant headteachers.
- An after-school club run by the governing body meets until 6pm every weekday during the school term.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - always setting work that provides an appropriate level of challenge for the most able pupils
 - ensuring guidance provided by leaders is followed consistently by all staff so that improvements become well established in all classes.
- Raise achievement in writing by ensuring:
 - pupils are taught methods to enable them to spell unfamiliar words, and are expected to use these methods in their writing
 - consistently high expectations for the quality of writing in all subjects.
- Improve the management of the school and effectiveness of the governing body by ensuring:
 - governors have the training and guidance necessary to support the school and hold leaders to account
 - the structure that governors use to organise themselves is fit for purpose and effective.

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 leadership and management requires improvement

- Over the last few years uncertainties and many changes of staff have undermined leaders' efforts to establish sustained improvements. Governors did not give the school the clear direction it needed through this unsettled period. This has had an adverse impact on the school's performance, pupils' achievement and staff morale.
- Some recent improvements in governance and the formation, last year, of an effective leadership team have resulted in the school improving at a good rate. Pupils' progress throughout the school has accelerated because teaching is getting better. Leaders now check teaching and learning regularly and have clear procedures whereby teachers' effectiveness is rewarded and underperformance tackled. Although more remains to be done, recent, good improvements are evident in lessons and in pupils' work.
- Important recent changes, such as the introduction of phonics teaching in Year 3, and a much sharper focus on reading in general, have improved rates of progress in reading in a short period of time.
- The school is an orderly, well-run community. It promotes mutual respect and a strong sense of community in which care for one another and tolerance are strongly encouraged. The new leadership team is creating an ethos in which pupils can flourish and where all the pupils feel equally valued. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. However, the leaders and governors were slow to implement fully the latest requirements.
- Subject leaders are given opportunities to check their subject first hand, are asked to give their recommendations and plan for improvements. The steps being taken, for example, to improve reading have proved particularly effective in accelerating progress for those pupils currently in school.
- Information about pupils' progress is being used increasingly effectively. Class teachers now have much greater understanding of pupils' progress, so they can recognise where extra support is needed. Regular meetings to check how well pupils are making progress include all teachers, so a pupil's previous teacher can contribute to discussions about to any extra support that a pupil may need.
- Staff share expertise to plan the curriculum. Whenever possible, a unit of work will include a suitable visit or activity to enhance pupils' learning. For example, pupils recently dressed as evacuees from the Second World War and spent the day as they might have done. Pupils say visits like this help them to gain a better understanding, for example, of a period in history.
- Pupils have a good understanding of democracy and what it means to be British. Older pupils visit the council chambers and role-play presenting, debating and voting on different points of view. News magazines are part of the wider range of reading material now in every class. Careers Day, involving parents and others talking about their jobs, introduces pupils to many occupations. Pupils are also encouraged to aspire to a university education.
- Additional sports funding is used effectively. While the school already had a strong focus on physical education, funds have been used to train additional staff to a high level, and to broaden the range of activities open to pupils. Pupils are clear how physical exercise helps them stay healthy.
- Pupil premium funds are now having a much greater impact than in the recent past. The money is now being used effectively to provide carefully planned teaching for small groups of pupils, within lessons. As a result, disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are making faster progress.
- Parents appreciate that members of staff are on the playground to greet pupils and be accessible to them at the start of each day. The new website is seen by parents as a big improvement, offering much more information about the work and life of the school, and better communication.
- The school is working closely with other local schools, to the benefit of staff and pupils. With teachers from the schools that pupils come from and go to, they are developing a shared approach to assessing

pupils' progress. In the meantime, this group of schools has agreed to continue using the existing system for assessment, particularly as it is known and understood by pupils and their parents. The school also works cooperatively with other schools. This benefits staff, who share training, and pupils, who enjoy many sporting events.

- The school carefully selects the services it purchases from the local authority and benefits from the expertise that it receives, for example, in analysing data about pupils' and the school's performance.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have recognised that the way they have organised themselves in the past has not always been effective. Some governors have said they do not feel they have a voice. As a result, the governing body has begun to make important changes, such as to its committee structure.
- While most financial resources have been very carefully managed, until this year governors did not check that pupil premium funding was allocated for the intended purpose, or what impact it had on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. This has now been corrected.
- Governors have a secure grasp of the quality of teaching and are fully aware of the links between salary progression and teachers' performance. They have a thorough understanding of data and use this when setting the headteacher targets. Governors have a broad understanding of how the school promotes British values.
- An aspiration of governors is to improve communication. To this end, the new Chair and several other relatively recently appointed governors are active in the school. However, while each governor is linked with a class, staff say this is not effective. About a third of staff responding to the inspection questionnaire said they do not hear about important decisions taken by governors.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Because they were involved in writing the behaviour policy, pupils understand it and the reasons behind it. As a result, they follow it closely and few instances of misbehaviour occur. Exclusions are rare.
- Pupils enjoy working together and helping one another. A pupil will often be the first to notice another is struggling, and to offer help. All younger pupils have an older reading 'buddy' to help them to improve.
- Pupils look forward to being 'pupil of the day'. In this and other ways, such as celebration assembly, the school gives strong emphasis to raising self-esteem through praise and encouragement. Pupils are also learning to assess and improve their own work.
- Pupils respect staff and recognise the importance each plays through their different roles in school. They understand the safety reasons why midday supervisors sometimes refuse to let them do an activity.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. During the inspection, a Year 6 class participated with other schools in an operatic production. This provided them with the chance to work as part of a larger group, share ideas and exercise self discipline in following stage directions. As a result, the pupils experienced a sense of accomplishment and pride in their contribution.
- Attendance is well above average. Pupils say they like school and the 'fun' ways most teachers present their learning. They are punctual to school and ready for lessons.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Although, the school takes all practical steps to keep pupils as safe as possible, it was slow to implement the most recent requirements. All requirements are now in place for keeping pupils safe.
- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying and say that it is very rare. They are confident, should it occur, that staff will resolve any difficulty. They know about e-safety and the potential for cyber-bullying

because they are well taught about these potential threats.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because some tasks do not provide the right level of challenge for the most able pupils. As a result, these pupils do not make the progress they should.
- While pupils are taught some writing skills and techniques well, teachers do not have consistently high expectations of pupils' writing in other subjects. Consequently, their progress in writing is not fast enough to raise standards quickly.
- While school leaders are working with staff to make good improvements in teaching and learning, such as in marking, some important changes are not found consistently in all classes. For example, leaders have asked staff to make better use of classroom displays to raise expectations and accelerate progress but not all staff have followed this guidance.
- Pupils and staff work well together. Very little time is wasted as pupils respond well and show interest and enthusiasm. In Year 6, for example, pupils were fascinated by a picture of a young child, upset at having his hair cut, and were immediately keen to discuss his predicament.
- Enjoyment is a strong feature of learning because teachers present activities in a way that pupils see as 'fun'. In Year 4, mental mathematics became a game with every pupil trying their utmost to help the class compete against its own previous best time. As a result, their rapid recall of number facts improved. This illustrates well why the teaching of mathematics has, in recent years, resulted in pupils reaching higher standards than in reading and writing.
- Teachers use effective methods to check learning during lessons, for example, posing questions that enable pupils to explain what they have understood. The procedures for marking pupils' work are identical across all classes so pupils, whichever teacher they work with, know what to expect and look for. They say it is very helpful because the marking states what they need to improve next.
- Improvements in the teaching of phonics and increased expectations of what pupils can achieve in reading are accelerating progress. Boys who were struggling with reading and were beginning to lose enthusiasm have been given steps to improvement and clear incentives. They have also benefited from reading with a self-help group of like-minded boys, sharing their thoughts and ideas.
- Teaching assistants move between classes to ensure they work where need is greatest. Whether working with individuals or groups, they strike a good balance between supporting and challenging them.
- A recent improvement is that extra support, for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, now happens inside the classroom. This means that the teacher can have a more direct influence on their learning, checking progress and answering any questions as they occur. Similar arrangements are in place to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. As a result their progress this year has accelerated.
- Pupils and their parents know what to expect for homework, and they feel it is appropriate. There is a good balance of activities that practise what has been learnt at school, and those to prepare for future lessons.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because standards in writing are not as high as they should be and too few of the most able pupils are reaching high standards.
- Progress in writing is not fast enough to raise standards quickly. When pupils are taught new aspects of

writing they do not practise and hone them when writing in other subjects. The school recognises spelling is a weakness. Some teachers do not expect or require pupils to check their spellings when writing, so standards are not improving as they should.

- The most able pupils benefit from the good range of interesting extra activities they undertake. However, in day-to-day lessons they often receive tasks that are too easy. As a result, the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in the school, or reaching higher than expected standards, is below average.
- Attainment when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. In recent years pupils have made better progress, and reached higher standards, in mathematics than in reading and writing. The school believes this is because pupils benefit from being grouped with those of similar ability. In addition, pupils are given regular opportunities to use their skills in real-life investigations, or to benefit younger pupils. For example, pupils in Year 5 designed games to give younger pupils practice in aspects of mathematics that they are finding difficult to understand.
- Progress in reading is improving rapidly throughout the school, following several changes introduced by staff under the guidance of school leaders. Pupils also benefit from parents being far more involved than they have been previously, reading with them and using approaches explained to them by the teachers to improve their child's fluency and understanding.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making increasingly good progress from their various starting points because their needs are carefully monitored and well supported. The school works particularly closely with parents so pupils receive a similar approach at home and school.
- The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school is closing. Currently, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils' is accelerating throughout the school. In reading, progress is roughly half as fast again as that of their peers. In writing, progress is similar for both groups. In mathematics, disadvantaged pupils are generally ahead. However, these improvements are too recent to be reflected in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils at the end of Year 6 last year. These pupils were about two terms behind the other pupils in the school and other pupils nationally in mathematics, five terms behind them in reading and four terms in writing.

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	137311
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	448621

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Perry-Yates
Headteacher	Alison Cullum
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01508 530459
Fax number	01508 532494
Email address	office@st-marys.norfolk.sch.uk

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