

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Kirkley Cliff Road, Lowestoft, NR33 0DG

Inspection dates

17 March – 20 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and other leaders, including governors, have high expectations of staff and pupils. They monitor the work of the school well and ensure that staff receive effective training and guidance on how to improve their work
- Teaching is effective. Staff successfully use a range of strategies to engage and motivate pupils. They also provide pupils with helpful feedback on their work so that they know what they need to do to improve it.
- Recent improvements to the teaching of English have led to all groups of pupils making accelerated progress.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe. They have positive attitudes to learning.
- Teachers' mathematical subject knowledge is used well to develop pupils' understanding and application of key mathematical skills.
- Pupils benefit from the specialist teaching in subjects such as music and physical education. As a result, they enjoy participating in a range of events and activities both in school and in the local community.
- Teachers' expectations are clear and pupils show respect for each other, concentrate on their work and try hard to succeed. They have pride in their work and in their school.
- Provision in the early years is good. Children make good progress and are prepared well for their move to Year 1.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons, there is not enough challenge for the most-able pupils. As a result, these pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils are not challenged to develop their writing and mathematical skills in subjects such as science, history and geography in Years 4, 5 and 6.
- Although attendance is improving, it remains below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes, talked to pupils and looked at their work. Some observations were undertaken together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with governors, senior and other leaders, local authority and diocesan advisers and a group of Year 6 pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 25 responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Parent View. They also spoke to a small number of parents as they arrived at school with their children.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from Key Stage 1 and Year 6 read and spoke to them about the books they enjoy reading.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, minutes of governing body meetings and information about pupils' attainment, progress and attendance. Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were also examined.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and at playtime.
- Inspectors took account of the 27 responses to the staff questionnaire provided by Ofsted.
- The inspection of 17-18 March 2015 was extended by one day. Two inspectors returned to the school to complete the inspection on 20 April 2015.

Inspection team

Pete Sewell, Lead inspector	Seconded Inspector
Margaret Dutton	Additional Inspector
Paul Tomkow	Her Majesty's Inspector
Prue Rayner	Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Three quarters of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language has increased over the past two years and is now in line with the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- The school is receiving support from a national leader in education.
- Children in the early years attend the school on a full time basis.
- The school meets the current government floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress in Key Stage 2 by:
 - ensuring that there is always a high level of challenge in lessons for the most-able pupils
 - making sure that all pupils are given the opportunity to develop their writing and mathematical skills in history, geography and science.
- Improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and other senior leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. They monitor the work of staff and the achievement of pupils carefully. Their evaluation of the school's work is accurate; it results in appropriate actions being taken to address the aspects that need to improve. A good example of this is the recent action taken to improve the teaching of reading and writing. The changes made are already having a positive impact on the progress that pupils are making.
- The headteacher acted promptly to reallocate leadership responsibilities, in response to the absence of a key member of staff. The leadership team she has created has the skills and understanding to fulfil its role effectively. The development and monitoring of the new systems to improve reading and writing are an emerging strength. School leaders have also recently benefitted from opportunities to observe good practice in other schools. A national leader in education is also supporting the development of improved assessment processes.
- Staff performance is managed effectively; teachers are set precise targets relating to the quality of their work and the progress all groups of pupils in their care make. As a result, they plan their teaching carefully.
- Leaders have ensured the curriculum covers all statutory requirements. Subject leaders have developed plans to ensure that teaching covers all areas of the new national curriculum, including computing and French. The school is rightly proud of the quality of work in subjects such as music, art and physical education. However, in years 4, 5 and 6, pupils are not given the opportunity to apply and develop their writing or apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding in subjects such as geography, history and science. This means that the quality of work in these subjects is not as good as should be.
- The school promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils well through a range of subjects and through specially planned events. For example, the school sponsors a child in Zambia and is involved in distributing food through a local food bank. Activities are also planned to engage pupils in reflection and to develop their understanding of prejudice and tolerance; they learn about a range of different faiths and cultures. Combined with the well-planned curriculum, this understanding prepares pupils well for their transition to secondary school and for life in modern Britain.
- The extra primary sports funding is used to buy in local coaching expertise. This is enabling pupils to experience a range of sports such as hockey, football and tennis at the same time as developing the expertise of the teaching staff.
- Extra funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to provide additional teaching and support for pupils needing to improve their achievement. In addition, some pupils are funded to attend breakfast club to facilitate their readiness to learn, and an after-school homework club. As a result of this well-planned intervention, disadvantaged pupils are achieving better than their peers nationally and as well as their classmates.
- Governors and school leaders have ensured that the school promotes equal opportunities and that expectations are high for all pupils. Records of poor behaviour are well kept and indicate that incidents are reducing in number.
- School leaders have ensured that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place. The school's written policies have not always reflected the high standards seen in the safeguarding practices that are employed to protect pupils. However, following advice given to the school, improvements have been made and both policies and procedures meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority provides light touch support but retains a close relationship with the school which now includes termly visits to support and challenge school leaders. It has provided training for governors,

which was highly valued, and helpful advice for school leaders on matters relating to staffing and finance.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are well informed about the school and know how well it is performing. They have received training on how to scrutinise and challenge school information effectively. As a result, they know the importance of tracking pupils' progress as well as their attainment. They have used this knowledge to provide greater challenge to the headteacher and other leaders about the need to improve pupils' progress. Governors oversee the management of the performance of teachers and they know that pay awards are only made when teachers are effective in securing the progress of those they teach.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Children in the early years are quickly introduced to the high expectations of their teachers through regular and consistent reminders to correct their behaviour. As a result, they are happy, busy and work well together in a calm and orderly environment. These positive attitudes to learning form the building blocks for good behaviour throughout the school.
- In many lessons, pupils are expected to share their ideas and to develop their thinking in pairs or small groups. As a result, they develop the ability to think tasks through and change their approach if they find a better way of working.
- Pupils are polite and tolerant of each other. They often have strong opinions which they are eager to share, but the school has ensured that this is done in a climate of respect. Pupils know how they are expected to behave and understand the rewards and sanctions used to maintain good behaviour.
- Pupils from across the school mix at lunchtimes on the school field and playground. Their play is well managed and pupils of all ages cooperate well together. Pupils say they enjoy the sports activities and games activities that are provided.
- Attendance was below the national average in 2014. The school has taken rigorous action, working closely with parents where their children's attendance is not good. Although attendance has improved, as a result of these actions, it remains below the national average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View, stated that their children feel safe while at school. Pupils know from notices around school and from being taught about how to keep safe that they can speak to a member of staff if they have any concerns. They say they feel safe and that staff listen to their opinions on a range of issues related to their wellbeing.
- Pupils understand the different forms of bullying and name calling. Incidents of bullying are rare and dealt with effectively. Pupils' understanding of discrimination demonstrates how well they are taught about social and cultural issues.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers plan lessons which interest and engage pupils. Skilful questioning is used to challenge pupils and encourage them to think deeply about their work. High expectations of effort and standards in most subjects mean that pupils present their work well and show determination to succeed.
- The school's approach to the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is a particular strength. It is enabling the youngest children to read and write independently and older pupils to spell complex words correctly.

- Teachers provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to improve and use their writing skills. Pupils in a Year 2 class were seen sequencing the instructions for cleaning out a hamster cage. The pupils were expected to use a variety of adverbs to make the instructions both more meaningful and interesting. High expectations from the teacher led to some outstanding work from the pupils.
- Particular focus has been given to developing Key Stage 2 pupils' understanding and use of more complex grammar and punctuation. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they are beginning to make good progress and are reaching higher standards in their written work because teaching is more effective.
- New approaches have recently been introduced to the teaching of reading and writing. A renewed focus on reading means that pupils now read more regularly from a wider range of texts. The work seen in pupils' books shows that they are developing the ability to critically analyse and interpret different text types. Pupils in Year 5 were observed working on the features of a biography, using Anthony Horowitz as a focus. The pupils found the teaching materials stimulating and as a result they made good progress.
- Teachers use a range of strategies to help pupils understand new learning in mathematics; these include the use of practical resources and a greater focus on how pupils set out their work when making calculations, to ensure the correct placement of numbers. Pupils are encouraged to draw on prior learning and teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to solve problems and use their new learning in meaningful ways. The work in pupils' books show good rates of improvement.
- Teachers mark and assess pupils' work regularly and provide useful feedback to pupils on how they are doing and on what they need to do next to improve. Teachers use assessment information well to measure the progress pupils are making. The school has put into place a wide range of intervention activities which ensure that when the learning of any pupils starts to slow, they are quickly identified and given appropriate support.
- In years 4, 5 and 6 teachers do not use subjects such as geography, history or science to develop pupils' writing or the use and application of their mathematical knowledge. This limits the progress that pupils make, particularly those of higher ability, both in these subjects and in English and mathematics.
- In many lessons, teaching assistants enhance the learning of the pupils they work with. This is because their work is well planned and they know what progress pupils are expected to make. Careful deployment of this extra support means that all pupils receive focused teaching from their teacher as well as support from additional adults.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children make good progress in the Reception class and Key Stage 1. Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been significantly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics for the past three years.
- The high standards achieved by the end of Key Stage 1 mean that pupils begin Key Stage 2 well-prepared for the next stage of their education. The work seen in the Year 3 books, during this inspection, shows that pupils are continuing to make good progress in this class. High quality work was seen in pupils' books across the whole curriculum.
- Overall attainment was broadly in line with the national average in 2014, after having been significantly above in 2013.
- The progress made by the 2014 Year 6 cohort was less strong than in previous years. Too few pupils made better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The most-able pupils, in particular, failed to make sufficient progress across Key Stage 2. School leaders are taking effective action to address this issue and work in pupils' books indicates that pupils of all abilities are now making better progress.

- Following a review of standards in English across the school in 2014, school leaders made changes to the way in which reading and writing are taught. These changes have been implemented effectively in all classes. Pupils' work shows that they are now reading a wider range of texts with greater understanding and that higher standards are being achieved in their written work during English lessons.
- Extra intervention has been implemented to support pupils identified as underachieving against the new National Curriculum in mathematics. Current assessment information, records of pupil progress meetings and pupils' work provides robust evidence to show that pupils in Year 6 are making better progress and are on track to achieve higher standards in 2015. The proportions making expected and better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics are currently in line with or above the 2014 national standards.
- Disabled pupils and those that have special educational needs are making good progress across the school. Their progress is closely monitored and teachers provide timely support and intervention to ensure that the rate of their learning does not slow.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils is too small to report on because individuals could be identified. However, these pupils are well supported and make expected and sometimes better than expected progress across the school.

The early years provision

is good

- Children start in the Reception class with knowledge, skills and abilities which are generally typical for their age, although the school's assessments show that an increasing proportion have communication, social, emotional and language skills that are below those typically found. However, children make good progress in the Reception class and by the time they start in Year 1 they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The school's arrangements for ensuring that children make a good start at the school are effective. The early years leader visits several different pre-school providers to draw on practitioners' knowledge of individual children's skills and abilities and to establish positive relationships with the children before they start school. Parents are also fully involved. They say they were well supported to help their children start school. They appreciate the advice they are given about how to support their child's learning and development.
- The early years team are very effective in supporting and enhancing children's learning when key skills such as phonics and number are taught. Staff provide excellent individual support in these sessions so children make rapid progress in acquiring early reading, writing and mathematical skills. Adults provide children with positive feedback about their learning and sensitive guidance about how they can improve what they are doing. As a result of this effective teaching children learn quickly and well.
- Children have access to a range of activities both inside the classroom and outdoors. These activities are planned carefully and adults take account of the children's prior learning so that activities build on what they know and can do. Children enjoy the opportunities to learn independently and develop good social skills. However, sometimes there is not enough guidance for children and adults about the learning opportunities that are available through the planned activities. As a result, some opportunities for children to learn more effectively through their play are not taken.
- The management of behaviour is calm and responsive to children's needs. As a result, children behave well and feel safe. Children are supported to settle into the school's routines and the vast majority understand expectations, work with concentration and enjoy learning. In a small number of instances, where children's needs are greater and they find it more difficult to conform to expectations, staff work hard to maintain their engagement and ensure they understand what is expected of them.

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	124780
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	463083

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Liane Briggs
Headteacher	Mrs Veronica Short
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2011
Telephone number	01502 565384
Fax number	NA
Email address	headteacher@stmarysrcps.org

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