

St Mary's Church of England Academy

Trinity Avenue, Mildenhall, Bury St Edmunds, IP28 7LR

Inspection dates 8–9 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Although the principal and senior leaders ensure that achievement is improving, not enough pupils make good progress and so attainment is below average in mathematics and it is slightly lower than last year in reading by end of Year 6.
- Not enough is done to help disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to catch up with their classmates.
- Individual pupil targets shared with parents, including children's targets in the early years do not always make it clear how pupils could reach the next stage of development in their work.
- Leaders do not ensure that all parents understand in detail how well their child is doing in the key areas of learning from Year 1 to 6.
- Teachers do not always check on how well pupils are doing part way through the lesson and help those making slower progress to develop their skills more effectively.
- Misconceptions or gaps in pupils' knowledge are not always sorted out successfully and so a few pupils are not ready for the next lesson.
- Subject leaders do not keep a close eye on how much progress different groups of pupils are making in every year group.
- Leaders do not always expect teachers to demonstrate that they have met personal targets in between formal observations and so a few do not improve their skills as much as they could.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the early years get a good start to their education and so their attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the start of Year 1.
- Pupils' progress in writing is good. This is because teachers understand how to develop pupils' spelling and grammar skills effectively.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those whose families are in the armed forces make good progress in learning to speak, read, write and use mathematics.
- This year, the gap between pupils supported by pupil premium funding and the rest in Year 6 closed. This is because extra tuition is used well to help disadvantaged pupils catch up.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Consequently, pupils become thoughtful and mature young people.
- Pupils feel safe in school and parents agree. This is because staff care for them diligently.
- Pupils concentrate in lessons and listen carefully to staff and other pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 23 lessons, some jointly with the principal. As well as observing lessons, inspectors also studied pupils' records of progress and the work in pupils' books in many year groups. They heard some pupils read and attended one whole-school assembly and a few class assemblies.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils, the principal and members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, phase leaders and other staff responsible for areas of the school's work. The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body.
- Inspectors analysed the 81 responses to the Ofsted Parent View online survey.
- Inspectors took account of the 27 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including records of pupils' behaviour and the subject leaders' plans. They looked at leaders' records describing the school's success in improving teaching, minutes of governing body meetings and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Jackie Cousins, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Liz Kissane	Additional Inspector
John Greevy	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's Church of England Academy converted to become an academy school in February 2012. Its predecessor school was called St. Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School. The school has been inspected once since it converted to an academy.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Children attend the early years full time in the Reception Year.
- Most pupils are White British and only a small proportion are from minority ethnic groups. A few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is average. This additional funding is for looked-after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals. Additional funding is also received for pupils with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- A considerable proportion of pupils join or leave the school part way through Years 2 to 6. When spaces open up in a year group they are filled. A few of the pupils are from families with a parent serving in the armed forces.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been several changes in staffing in the last two years. This year, some classes changed their teacher part way through the academic year. The principal and special educational needs coordinator joined the school in September 2014. A few subject leaders are new to their roles.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and the impact teaching has on pupils' progress, especially between Year 2 and Year 6 in reading and mathematics, by making sure:
 - more pupils make good progress and work at higher levels of skill and attainment
 - disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make faster progress and more catch up with their classmates
 - teachers check on gaps in pupils' knowledge and on what pupils do not know part way through a lesson, and ensure that pupils making slower progress catch up
 - pupils' personal targets shared with parents, including those in the early years, make it clear how pupils can reach the next stage of development.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - subject leaders check more carefully on the progress made by different groups of pupils
 - leaders encourage teachers to demonstrate that they have met their personal targets to improve the impact their teaching has on pupils' achievement
 - parents are helped to understand in detail how well their child is doing in the key areas of learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Although leaders have worked diligently to eradicate weak teaching and raise achievement this year, they have not managed to make sure that teaching is consistently good and that all groups of pupils make as much progress as they could.
- Senior leaders observe teaching regularly, and targets are agreed with staff. However, leaders do not encourage teachers to show that they have met their personal targets in between formal observations. As a result, not all teachers improve their teaching skills as well as they could.
- Subject leaders are developing their roles but they do not always keep a close eye on all groups of pupils in each year group. This is because a few are new to their roles and have not had enough time to develop this aspect of their work.
- The principal leads the school with a professional and methodical approach to every challenge he takes on. The senior leadership team works with the principal effectively and is driving improvement. Pupils' progress in writing is much better this year because leaders have developed teachers' knowledge of how to promote pupils' spelling, grammar and creative use of interesting words.
- The principal and staff create a welcoming atmosphere in the school, where pupils behave well, concentrate on their work and attend regularly. All pupils from different backgrounds and abilities are quickly integrated into school life whenever they start at the school. Staff support pupils' personal development rigorously. Pupils say that staff treat boys and girls equally fairly and discrimination is not tolerated.
- The pupils say that they like learning many subjects and particularly enjoy writing letters, reading texts solving mathematical problems and drawing pictures. Often topics develop more than one skill at a time; for instance, pupils used their literacy skills successfully when they researched on the internet the Norman invasion of England. Then they used this research to help them draw pictures and make a collage of people from the past.
- The school spends the primary sports funding carefully. New equipment and training for staff enable pupils to learn new skills in sports, such as cricket and handball. The school football team had a successful year and was in the local finals.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. During the recent general election, pupils held their own elections and, every year, pupils vote for their school council representatives. In assemblies and lessons, they learn about people's beliefs and cultures from other parts of the world, such as those of the Hindu and Buddhist faiths.
- Pupil premium funding and the extra funds for pupils with a parent in the armed forces are used more methodically this year. Consequently, the gap in attainment between those supported by this funding and the rest has closed by Year 6. Eligible pupils are given extra tuition on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, and far more disadvantaged pupils attend after-school and holiday activities.
- Virtually all the parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire said their child is happy in this school. Some parents said they would like more information about how much progress their child is making. Inspectors agree that parents are not always given enough information about whether their child is making good progress or not.
- The school works successfully with other agencies, the local authority and parents to keep pupils safe. Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are followed rigorously. All staff completed basic child protection training in January this year, and induction procedures ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's procedures for safeguarding. Risk assessments are completed carefully to make sure that the risks of accidents and incidents are minimised.

■ The school does not receive support from the local authority. It receives appropriate external support from a private company. This has assisted the principal to improve teaching so that there is no inadequate teaching.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is effective. The governors know the school well. They know that children make good progress in the early years because staff carefully check on what children can and cannot do at the start of the year and regularly look to see if the gaps in their knowledge have gone.
- Governors are dedicated to raising standards in the school. They find out about the impact of the teaching by looking thoughtfully at school data and pupils' work in books. They know that pupils in Key Stage 2 are not making as much progress as they could in reading and mathematics.
- The governors manage finances astutely. Staff who perform successfully over time are given pay rises and promoted to more senior roles. The governors see to it that teachers who are not performing as well as they could are supported to improve their skills through mentors and extra guidance with planning. Governors rigorously watch over the performance of the principal.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and mature young people. They work together well, inside and outside the classroom. The pupils, parents, staff and governors all agree that behaviour is good. The school has received many positive comments about the behaviour of pupils when they are out on trips.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their work. They talk excitedly about the work of which they are proud. One said, 'I am pleased with the quality of my writing, which is at Level 5 standard' and another said he is proud of their work to protect the environment. This is because staff plan interesting topics which develop pupils' basic skills and their personal development.
- Pupils and staff enjoy constructive relationships. This means that pupils learn to persevere when challenges are tough. They show high levels of self-esteem, such as when they plan and lead their own assemblies for the class.
- Pupils value each others' comments and speak considerately to young and old alike. They are tolerant of people from different backgrounds and abilities. They raise money to help those who are less fortunate than themselves.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The pupils say they are safe in school and parents agree with this. This is because staff care for them thoughtfully.
- Bullying rarely occurs. One pupil summed up others' feelings when he said, 'We don't have much bullying here and, on the rare occasions we do, it is sorted out straightaway.'
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in school because they can voice their concerns through the school council. The staff listen to them and act on their worries. Safety on the internet is given a high priority because all units in the computer studies programme cover how to handle a wide range of situations pupils may find themselves in when they are online.
- Pupils' attendance is improving a little and it is average. The school is beginning to follow up on absence more rigorously than it used to, and more rewards are given for high levels of attendance.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- There are some notable strengths in teaching, especially in the early years, but the quality is not consistently good enough to bring about good progress from Years 2 to 6.
- Teachers do not always ensure that the most-able pupils are challenged enough. This is because the targets used in school and shared with parents, especially in mathematics and reading, are rather broad. As a result, pupils, including the most able, are not totally clear about how to reach the next stage of development.
- The teaching of mathematics requires improvement. Teachers develop pupils' mathematical skills adequately. They do not always ensure that errors or pupils' misconceptions are sorted out before the next session begins. As a result, some pupils are not ready to go on to more complex work and so their progress is slower than it might be.
- The teaching of reading requires improvement and pupils make steady progress. The development of pupils' comprehension skills and the use of letters and the sounds that they make (phonics) are built up systematically. In recent years, an average proportion of Year 1 pupils met the nationally expected standard in the check on pupils' phonic knowledge. Occasionally, teachers do not check up on what pupils do and do not know part way through a session. This means that a few pupils do not reach the levels of skill of which they are capable.
- Teachers develop pupils' writing skills well. Displays in classrooms are used thoughtfully to show the progress made by every pupil since September 2014. Teachers have improved their skills in teaching grammar, spelling, use of vocabulary and how to structure a piece of writing. As a result, pupils are making good progress in this area of learning. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection.
- Another significant improvement since the last inspection is seen in the use of marking. Teachers now explain to pupils what they have done successfully and often pupils respond to staff comments or questions.
- The teaching of pupils with a parent in the forces is good. These pupils develop their basic skills effectively in all areas of learning and especially in learning to speak, read, write and use mathematics.
- Regular checks are made on pupils' attainment by staff and teachers. The school is beginning to alert everyone to those pupils who are making slower progress. The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is starting to improve but not enough is done to assist them to catch up with their classmates.
- Staff keep a close eye on pupils' personal development. They care for and guide pupils carefully. Consequently, classrooms are pleasant places to work. Pupils respond well to staff. Teachers use questions effectively to make pupils think deeply about their work and about their lives. Paired and group discussions are used thoughtfully to develop pupils' language skills, especially of those who speak English as an additional language.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, progress and achievement between Years 3 to 6 have varied quite a bit. This year, most groups are making better progress, but some are not reaching the standards of which they are capable.
- The achievement of the most-able pupils requires improvement. Not enough pupils reach the higher levels of attainment in reading and mathematics because teachers do not always expect enough of them in lessons.
- In 2014, Year 6 results showed that pupils had not made sufficient progress since the end of Year 2.

However, the results are misleading because over one-quarter of this year group spent part of this key stage in other schools. The pupils who attended this school from Year 2 to Year 6 made expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, even for these pupils, progress was still not good.

- Last year, the attainment of pupils in Year 6 was average in reading and writing but below average in mathematics. Results received by the school this week indicate that attainment will again be similar to last year but they are slightly lower in reading because fewer pupils attained the higher levels in reading.
- This year, progress is improving, including the achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups. Nevertheless, the achievement of pupils who attend the school between Years 2 and 6 is not good. Progress in writing is better, and so attainment is rising. However, not enough Year 6 pupils have made better than expected progress in reading and mathematics.
- In 2014, pupils in Year 6 who speak English as an additional language made good progress in writing and mathematics and at least average progress in reading. This year, their progress is better and they made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because staff explain the meanings of words carefully to pupils and develop their language and grammar skills.
- Last year, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils was below average. In 2014, the gap in attainment between those who receive pupil premium funding and others nationally was six terms in mathematics and three terms in reading and writing. The gap between those supported by the pupil premium funding and others in the school was four terms in mathematics and writing, and three terms in reading.
- This year, pupils in Year 6 who are eligible for this extra funding have made good progress and the gap between these pupils and others in the school has closed. This is because every one of these Year 6 pupils has attained the standard expected for this age group in reading, writing and mathematics, and a few attain standards of work which are above those expected for this age group.
- The progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs requires improvement. Only a small number of these pupils catch up with the others and attain the standard expected for their age by Year 6. The school has a new special needs coordinator but she has not had enough time to have a measurable impact on these pupils' progress.
- Throughout the school, pupils with a parent in the forces make good progress. This is because their skills are carefully assessed when they join the school and their individual learning needs are met well.
- In 2014, Year 2 results were average for reading and writing, and attainment at this level has been maintained this year. However, pupils are doing better in mathematics, and their attainment is slightly above average.

The early years provision

is good

- The children in the early years make better progress than the older pupils. This is because the leader has developed the ways staff check on what children do and do not know when they start at school, as well as throughout the school year. When children start at the school, their skills are at a typical level in most areas of learning. They make good progress and so attainment is above average this year in reading, writing and mathematics by the start of Year 1.
- Teaching is good. Teachers keep a close eye on children's progress and quickly pick up on those whose achievement is slower than expected. The personal targets of children which are shared with parents do not all explain clearly how children could reach the next stage of development.
- Behaviour is good and children learn to concentrate effectively. Children share equipment fairly and safely. They become thoughtful young people because staff manage them firmly and methodically. Children are safe and secure in the Reception classes. As a result, they become self-assured and are keen

to try out different ways of solving challenges.

- Leadership is good because the early years leader is always looking for ways to develop staff skills and make the provision even better for children. The children enjoy a broad range of activities, inside and outside the classroom. Practical activities are used productively to make learning memorable. Consequently, children are well prepared for Year 1.

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	137419
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	462045

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	417
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Cox
Principal	Colin Haley
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2013
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