

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Dellsome Lane, North Mymms, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL9 7NE

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' evaluation of the school is over-generous and actions to improve outcomes for pupils have been too slow. There remains significant underachievement in upper key stage 2.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because some teachers lack sufficient strategies and subject knowledge to ensure that pupils learn effectively across all curriculum areas. This is particularly evident in the early years.
- The school's information on the progress of pupils is not always supported by the work in their books.
- Not all teachers have the same high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Some do not teach lessons that consider the starting points of pupils and consequently do not provide sufficient challenge for the most able and support for pupils with low prior attainment.
- Middle leaders are not equipped with the skills to strategically lead their areas of responsibility. They do not have a clear view of the performance of their subject and how they can improve it.
- Readers are not sufficiently monitored to select appropriate books to develop their skills and encourage a pleasure in reading.

The school has the following strengths

- More recent changes to teaching have resulted in accelerated progress in phonics.
- Pupils are happy at school and proud to be part of their school community.
- Expectations for homework are very clear and prepare older pupils well for secondary school.
- Governance has improved and governors now have an accurate view of the school and are able to challenge leaders effectively.
- Attendance has improved and pupils facing additional emotional and social challenges are well supported to enjoy school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good by:
 - ensuring that teachers have the skills needed to accurately assess the quality of work in pupils' books in order to measure their achievement
 - developing teachers' ability to adapt lessons to support the learning of pupils from different starting points, particularly those with higher and lower prior attainment
 - improving teachers' knowledge, skills and understanding across subjects in the national curriculum, enabling them to plan, teach and assess all subjects effectively
 - providing pupils with consistent and clear information on how to complete activities, present work and correct misunderstandings
 - ensuring that pupils select reading books that match their ability level and that they read for meaning and pleasure.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - responding quickly to all areas for improvement to ensure that pupils' achievements are not compromised
 - checking that reported assessments are regularly evidenced in pupils' books, clarifying leaders' thresholds for age-related expectations
 - providing middle leaders with the skills required to lead a curriculum subject effectively and monitor standards accurately.
- Improve the provision in the early years by:
 - ensuring that leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and areas that require improvement
 - developing behaviour strategies that are used by all staff and have meaning for children aged four and five
 - improve the quality of teaching to support learning for all groups of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders have not responded quickly enough to the areas for improvement detailed in the previous inspection report. More recently, the headteacher has introduced new schemes and strategies that are starting to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes but these have not had sufficient time to become embedded as expected practice.
- Tracking of pupils' performance is not always accurate because outcomes recorded in tracking systems are not evident in pupils' books and in the expectations expressed by teachers in lessons.
- Leaders do not always have an accurate view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The national curriculum is not being taught to a consistently high standard. Leaders have allowed mathematics and English to dominate the improvements in teaching. Some advances are evident in these subjects but science, geography, history and other foundation subjects are taught less well.
- During the last academic year, leaders have worked closely with the local authority to focus their efforts on improving pupils' learning. Actions taken have started to have an impact on improving teaching. The gaps between the performance and attainment of different groups of pupils are diminishing and all pupils are starting to make better progress. This is most evident in key stage 1 and for disadvantaged pupils compared with others. Leaders are using the pupil premium funding effectively to support the latter improvements.
- There is an inclusive ethos at the school and pupils are well cared for, safe and happy. The pupil learning committee monitors the views of pupils and provides leaders with a useful insight into pupils' ideas about their school and the curriculum.
- Performance management procedures are in place and leaders hold teachers to account. A wider range of professional development opportunities are now being offered and these are clearly linked to the priorities for improvement. Staff are being given additional time to reflect on their practice and develop their teaching skills.
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils, together with class discussions and philosophical debates, contribute well to the effective delivery of a spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum. Pupils particularly enjoyed their trips to national concert arenas to perform.
- Support for pupils who are in the care of the local authority is a particular strength and the emotional and social needs of these pupils are catered for well, with specialist services being commissioned as required.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has become more strategic and pupils are making better progress as a result. The funding allocated to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively.
- Attendance is improving as a result of systems and procedures that ensure that parents are fully aware of attendance expectations and national requirements.
- Communication with parents has improved and they feel well informed about their

children's education. Parents are confident that their children are safe in school.

- The primary school PE and sports premium funding has increased pupils' access to a broader range of physical activities and now enables them to take part in many more sporting events than has been the case in the past.

Governance of the school

- Since the last inspection, governors have developed their practice and have a much better view of the overall performance of the school. They have a good understanding of their role and show a strong commitment to continuous improvement. Information is verified and used with increasing skill, effectively holding senior leaders to account.
- Governors receive regular reports from leaders and use these to challenge pupils' outcomes by asking pertinent questions and making their high expectations evident. They also provide good support to leaders and assist with tasks such as recruitment.
- Governors are aware of their statutory duties and make regular checks on the site, or commission specialists to carry out this task. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements are in place and systems and procedures are followed soundly.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Checks on the suitability of staff meet statutory requirements and staff are trained to recognise and respond promptly to concerns about pupils' well-being.
- Leaders actively seek to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are strong. For example, they undertook a comprehensive local authority audit that allowed them to review and further improve their arrangements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- While teaching is improving, some teachers' expectations of pupils are too low or not clear enough. In these classes, pupils do not make good progress because they are not clear about how to complete tasks or how to present their work. In some instances, pupils are not confident to ask for clarification on misunderstandings and these go unchecked.
- Some lessons do not consider pupils' starting points and, consequently, pupils are expected to complete activities that are not appropriate to their ability. This is most evident for pupils with low prior attainment and the most able pupils. As a result, they make limited progress.
- Marking and feedback support on-going assessment of pupils' understanding and are completed in accordance with school policy. All classes have an established routine to allow for pupils to respond to comments in their workbooks.
- The legacy of poor attainment evident in key stage two is being addressed through improved teaching, resulting in accelerated progress in some but not all classes.
- A change in the approach to teaching phonics has seen a significant improvement in pupils' ability to decode words and develop their reading and writing skills.
- In key stage 2, many readers are not sufficiently supported to select books that match their ability level or allow them to develop a pleasure in reading. Pupils are keen to read but need more support and guidance to embed their phonics strategies and use them more broadly to read for meaning.

- The agreed assessment policy provides teachers with a suitable framework to determine progress and recognise pupils' next steps. However, some teachers are not skilled enough to apply this accurately, resulting in lessons that do not extend learning and pupil performance data that cannot be supported by work in pupils' books.
- Teaching of mathematics has improved over the last 12 months. Effective training and participation in local authority pilot studies has enabled teachers to develop their understanding of more efficient mathematical methods and processes.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively, in key stages 1 and 2, to support groups and individual pupils. They are aware of the learning expectations of a lesson and seek out pupils who need support. Where pupils are allocated individual assistance, this is provided in a manner that allows the pupil to continue to develop independence rather than become reliant on adult help.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are happy at school and wear their uniform with pride.
- Nurture and care for pupils is a strength of the school. The whole St Mary's community supports the well-being of children and their families. Pastoral support has been of particular note as leaders have actively sought training and facilities that can help pupils experiencing different types of trauma.
- Pupils have a positive attitude to their learning and have been taught to recognise and model different characteristics of a learner. The association with the skill and a corresponding animal means that pupils of all ages are able to recognise ready rabbit, responsible dog, reflective owl, resilient tortoise and resourceful squirrel.
- Pupils develop a strong sense of community and their roles within the school community. As they move through the school, they are provided with opportunities to hold positions of responsibility. Pupils in Year 6 nominate younger pupils for weekly awards, present certificates in assembly and mentor new starters during playtimes.
- Pupils are well informed about how to respond to bullying and feel confident that any concerns will be resolved if they speak to an adult in school.
- Nomination and membership of the school council and the learning committee are taken seriously and it is evident that pupils' opinions are responded to by senior leaders and governors.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils show respect to their peers and adults in school.
- The value of routines and systems in the school are evident in the good behaviour of pupils. The strong Christian ethos in the school is woven through all aspects of school life.
- The majority of pupils attend school regularly and are rarely late. The school day has been moderated to support punctuality and enable pupils to start school each day ready to learn.
- Breaktimes are calm and orderly. Pupils are kind to one another and actively seek to

support their friends and classmates. The inspector observed a game of football, during which a boy stumbled. The injured pupil was supported by several peers while others sought assistance from a midday supervisor. They all stopped playing until their teammate was better and the game could continue with him involved.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Children enter the school performing slightly below what is typical for their age. A legacy of poor teaching and learning means that pupils are currently leaving the school attaining significantly below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, these pupils are not adequately prepared for the next phase of their education.
- Recently improved provision now means that pupils are making better progress from their starting points in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2, where pupils are starting to reach attainment standards in line with national expectations in mathematics and phonics. Progress for pupils in upper key stage 2 remains low. This improved progress is evident in English and mathematics, but less so in other areas of the curriculum.
- Numbers of pupils achieving at a higher standard are low. Based on the evidence seen in lesson observations and in pupils' books, the progress of the most able pupils is too slow and they are not reaching their potential.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their different starting points.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is variable between year groups and is directly related to the achievement of all pupils within the cohort. The difference between disadvantaged pupils and all pupils at the school is nominal in key stage one but more marked in upper key stage 2, where all pupils are attaining less well.
- Leaders have analysed the achievement of pupils with attendance below 90%. Following the nationally expected trend, this group of pupils generally performs below national and school averages. This information is used well by the school to promote better attendance with specific families.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The majority of the children enter the provision working at a standard slightly below that typical for children of their age. The recent outcomes for children leaving the early years provision indicate that they are achieving at a standard below the national average and this indicates that achievement in early years requires improvement. It is evident that children are not fully prepared to start Year 1.
- The quality of teaching in early years requires improvement. A broad range of learning opportunities and activities are provided throughout the school day. However, limited teaching strategies mean that children are not aware of behaviour and learning expectations and do not access the activities in a manner that supports learning.
- The classroom and outside learning environments are stimulating and promote learning. There is free flow between learning activities chosen by children, and staff make pertinent observations of children. These observations are used to create a record of a child's learning journey through the early years.
- Leadership of the provision requires improvement. The setting leader provides good opportunities for a smooth transition into the Reception class, with phased visits throughout the summer term. Once pupils enter the setting in September, these good preparations have limited impact on learning outcomes. This is because children are not effectively supported to access activities and lessons lack pace and purpose. The local authority is working with the class teacher to improve this.
- Behaviour expectations are inconsistent and individual staff members use different rewards and sanctions, with different thresholds and with different groups of children. This leaves many children confused and unsure of how to get attention if needed.

School details

Unique reference number	117497
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10011835

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Wootton
Headteacher	Vicky Humbles
Telephone number	01707690500
Website	www.stmarys565.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@stmarys565.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 July 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- St Mary's Church of England Primary School is smaller than average, with 157 pupils.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The majority of pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has been absent on maternity leave but is now back in her post. During her absence, the school was led by an interim headteacher and supported by an experienced headteacher from a neighbouring school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum

expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching, learning and assessment in all classrooms, around the school and at playtimes. They listened to pupils read in Years 1, 2, 3 and 6 and looked at the work in pupils' books.
- The inspection team met with groups of pupils, formally and informally, throughout the school day. Representatives from the pupils' learning committee gave the lead inspector a comprehensive tour of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle leaders and four members of the governing body. They met with representatives from the St Albans diocese and the local authority.
- The inspection team met with parents on the playground and during an informal drop-in session in the hall. They took into account the 20 responses to Ofsted's parent survey, including 10 received via the online questionnaire Parent View.

Inspection team

Deborah Pargeter, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Vanessa Love	Ofsted Inspector

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