

St Mary's Church of England (VC) Primary School

Southam Road, Banbury, Oxfordshire OX16 2EG

Inspection dates

12–13 October 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has brought about significant improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress since her arrival last year. She has established an effective leadership team and generated a strong team spirit among staff.
- School leaders and governors are ambitious for the school. They have high expectations of teachers and pupils and monitor the school's performance closely. School leaders check on teaching and pupils' progress regularly.
- Governors are well informed. As well as strong support, they provide a good level of challenge to school leaders.
- Teachers are better equipped to identify and effectively support pupils who speak English as an additional language or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of pupils. Combined with the school's ethos, it effectively promotes pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Staff give a high priority to ensuring that pupils acquire good communication skills and read well. Phonics is taught consistently well.
- Pupils feel safe at school. Safeguarding systems are effective and well known by staff. Adults establish good relationships with pupils and look after their welfare.
- Pupils like school. They behave well in lessons and as they move around the site. The school promotes regular attendance well. Attendance figures have risen for all groups of pupils and are running above average this year.
- Pupils' achievements across the school are improving. Current pupils are making good progress in most subjects. Children have a good start in the early years, where provision is effective, though children do not always have easy access to the outside area.
- Leaders do not ensure that teachers follow the school's policy to provide pupils with guidance on how they should improve their literacy skills when marking their writing in other subjects.
- Sometimes in lessons, teachers do not assess how well pupils understand a concept so that activities can be restructured accordingly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that teachers apply the school's assessment policy consistently by advising pupils how to improve their writing in all subjects.
- Ensure that teachers regularly check how well pupils understand ideas so that planned activities are more closely matched to pupils' prior learning.
- Ensure that children in the early years can readily choose to move between indoor and outside spaces during free-flow provision.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since her appointment a year ago, the headteacher has been relentless in her drive to improve the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make. The school has a clear direction and plan to continue the recent improvements. Following some staffing changes, the headteacher has created an effective and dedicated leadership team and generated a palpable team spirit and 'can do' attitude among staff.
- The headteacher tackled weaknesses in teaching straight away, setting up robust systems to evaluate and improve it. The quality of teaching is checked rigorously and involves subject leaders as well as senior staff. Teaching staff are set challenging targets, including ones to improve pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers and teaching assistants are committed to continually improving their practice.
- The school makes good use of training from external sources, such as through the Banbury Partnership, as well as from colleagues within school. For example, there has been effective training to eliminate weaker aspects of teaching, to improve leadership skills and to meet the needs of the school development plan. Teaching assistants are becoming highly skilled in supporting identified groups of pupils. Consequently, the quality of teaching and pupils' progress have improved.
- Senior leaders know where the school needs to improve. Effective plans are being implemented to maintain the rate of improvement. For example, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified promptly and given timely and well-focused extra help.
- The school offers the full range of national curriculum subjects, with a suitable emphasis on English and mathematics. Learning topics begin with a 'wow' event that catches pupils' interest, such as a trip to Stratford-upon-Avon or a bonfire, and finish with a final event that celebrates their achievements. The development of speaking and listening skills permeates the curriculum, which helps to compensate for the weaker language skills of a significant number of pupils. For example, pupils have good opportunities for discussion, role play and drama. In addition, pupils have many opportunities to write in subjects other than English so that they have a clear purpose for their writing. The school is investigating accreditation as a 'communication school'.
- On occasions, leaders take good account of the wide variation in ability and pupils' previous learning by combining year groups. Teachers plan for smaller groups of pupils with similar starting points effectively. Leaders ensure that the curriculum for each year group is completed appropriately.
- The school has used its additional sports funding well. Specialist coaches have introduced a range of sporting activities for pupils and enhanced teachers' coaching skills. Together with more after-school clubs and sports competitions, the numbers of pupils engaged in regular physical activity have increased. All pupils have the opportunity to learn to swim.
- St Mary's is a fully inclusive school. Pupils, in this multicultural community, learn to

respect and value one another through the school's active promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils learn about and really experience other cultures and religions. The school's values, including compassion and community, are emphasised in lessons and assemblies. The diversity of the school council reflects the broad range of ethnic backgrounds in the school. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about fundamental British values and experience them in action, such as democracy, when voting for school council representatives.

- The school ensures that there is equality of opportunity for all and no discrimination. For example, the pupil premium is used effectively to help eligible pupils to make better progress and develop their self-esteem and confidence. Support activities include in-class support and counselling from trained teaching assistants.
- Local authority and diocesan support, through guidance, challenge and training, has been effective in helping the school to establish strong leadership and good teaching. The headteacher continues to arrange specialist support to strengthen leaders' and teachers' skills, for example professional support for pupils' mental well-being.
- Parents have good support to help their children at home. There are regular parents evenings, workshops and opportunities to visit school and see how teachers work with pupils.
- Parents have commented positively on the recent improvements in teaching and pupils' behaviour. Comments such as 'the school has improved tremendously', 'my children are making amazing progress', 'the appointment of the new headteacher has led to noticeable improvements in standards and communication with parents' were common.
- Leaders do not ensure that teachers always stick closely to the school's marking policy. As a result, pupils do not get as much helpful guidance on how to improve their literacy skills in other subjects as they could.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is well equipped to check on the school's work and challenge it to do better. The governing body has recently been restructured and a new chair, with strong community links, appointed. Following an audit of their skills, governors undertook training to enhance their skills further and appointed new governors with relevant experience and expertise.
- Governors are clear about their roles and execute them diligently. They work closely with the headteacher to plan the strategic direction of the school and share with her the passion to continue the school's drive to improve.
- Governors are well informed about the school's performance. Apart from regular information from school leaders, they often arrange focused visits to the school to check on the implementation and impact of planned actions and to talk to staff and pupils.
- Governors know about the quality of teaching in school, how it has changed in the last year and the impact this has had on pupils' progress. With the help of school advisers, they manage the performance of the headteacher effectively. Governors make sure that all pay awards for teachers are fully justified.

- The governing body ensures that extra funding for the school, such as the pupil premium and primary sports fund, is used effectively. They know that the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is improving and that increasing numbers of pupils are regularly involved in sport.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Keeping pupils safe has a high priority in school. Being vigilant about pupils' welfare is a central part of the school's culture. All staff are well trained, including in the 'Prevent' duty, and school leaders provide regular updates on safeguarding matters. Staff are well aware of the procedures to follow to raise any concerns they have.
- The designated safeguarding leaders are experienced and resolute in their roles. They know their contacts in the local authority's social services well and are tenacious in ensuring that their concerns about particular children are followed up promptly.
- Several leaders are trained in safer recruitment and staff are appropriately vetted before being employed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching and learning has improved noticeably over the last year. Changes in staffing and training, including for teaching assistants, have strengthened the teaching force. Leaders have used challenge and effective support to promote better teaching where practice was weaker.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils are evident. Teachers manage their groups well, using simple techniques to gain the attention of the whole group and address pupils calmly. There is a positive atmosphere for learning and pupils settle down to work promptly and persevere with tasks. They readily respond to teachers' instructions.
- Teachers know their pupils well and plan effective support for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are less able. Consequently, these pupils are making good progress.
- Teachers know the abilities of pupils in their groups. They plan activities for the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, that will stretch them. In addition, the school provides opportunities for them to work with pupils of similar ability from other schools, such as science, art and history projects led by local sixth-form students.
- Teaching assistants are skilful and play an important role in teaching. They are well deployed to support small groups and identified pupils effectively. They check pupils' progress carefully, sharing that information with teachers.
- The new style of homework introduced this year, where pupils can choose the level of difficulty of the task, is appreciated by pupils and many parents. Meetings were held to explain the role of homework, including reading at home, to parents. Homework builds effectively on pupils' work in school and, in particular, helps them to develop their vocabulary.

- The teaching of phonics is consistent and effective. Pupils are grouped according to their phonics ability, which shows a wide range in early years and Year 1, and teaching is closely matched to their needs. Teachers and teaching assistants model clearly and accurately how to make sounds and explain how the sounds are produced. Phonics activities are regular and build progressively on previous learning. Pupils are encouraged to read regularly to adults at home and at school and to visit the local library. Staff make sure that books are at the right level of challenge for pupils.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan activities that interest and engage pupils. They take good account of the range of abilities and the prior learning of pupils in their groups. Ideas are developed logically and explained clearly so that pupils know what they are learning and why. Some questioning is skilful and draws out pupils' reasoning and helps develop their oracy skills. However, teachers sometimes fail to assess how clearly pupils understand an idea so that planned activities can be restructured accordingly.
- Teachers mark pupils' written work regularly and generally give them advice on how they can improve, using the school's marking policy. In most cases, pupils respond well. They say that teachers' comments or questions help them to improve their work. However, teachers do not always follow the school's policy and assess how well pupils are improving their writing in other subjects, which slows down pupils' progress in this area.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils like school and their teachers. Their confidence grows as they move up the school. Year 5 and 6 pupils spoke confidently about what they were learning and what they liked about school. Pupils across the school are happy to talk about what they are doing in class. They develop good attitudes to learning and they know that doing well at school is important.
- Pupils are polite and respectful towards adults and their peers. They generally listen attentively to others and cooperate well when working in groups. For example, pupils in Year 5 worked collaboratively to find out if things dissolved better in hot water.
- Pupils enjoy taking on extra responsibilities, for example as play leaders and members of the school council or worship team. Year 6 play leaders were seen successfully organising games for younger pupils at playtime.
- Pupils say that they feel safe everywhere in school and can always look to their teachers if they are ever worried or upset. They have learned how to stay safe in a range of situations, such as when crossing the road or using the internet.
- Pupils know about bullying and the different forms it can take, including cyber bullying. They know what to do if they see any bullying. Some pupils spoken to said that there had been some bullying in the past but they could think of no recent examples. They

were confident that their teachers would sort out any incidents quickly.

- Staff keep pupils safe at school. Pupils are well supervised and the site is secure. Employed staff are checked before starting at the school and visitors are appropriately vetted. Parents agreed that pupils are safe at school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff have high expectations of behaviour. Pupils know how they are expected to behave and the rewards and sanctions available. They conduct themselves well in lessons and when moving around the school.
- The school has implemented a more stringent system for parents to apply for authorised absence and to ensure that pupils attend school whenever possible. Letters home, threats of court action and the attention of the home, school, community link worker have ensured that parents understand that regular attendance is essential. Attendance was below average in recent years, but has improved this year for all groups of pupils and is currently just above average.
- Pupils reported that they get along with each other well and that misbehaviour in class was rare, though it occasionally happened. The school records all incidents of misbehaviour clearly, including the impact of the school's response. There have been few incidents of serious misbehaviour. Occasionally, when activities go on too long, a few pupils can lose interest and fidget.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Children start in the early years with a range of skills, knowledge and understanding that is below what is typical for their age. Pupils currently at the school are achieving well across the curriculum. The school's information about pupils' performance, and confirmed by work seen in pupils' books, shows that pupils in all years make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils are well supported to make good progress, similar to their classmates. The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are making good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- School leaders introduced a more effective system last year to identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language. As a result, teachers are now better able to plan activities to match these pupils' needs and these groups of pupils are making better progress, similar to that of their classmates.
- More-accomplished readers in Year 3 enjoy reading and read regularly. Typically, they read every day, including non-fiction texts. They show very good comprehension skills and read fluently and with feeling, recognising the impact of punctuation. They tackle unfamiliar words without hesitation.
- Through accurate and consistent teaching, pupils develop good skills in phonics. Weaker readers in Year 2, including those who speak English as an additional language,

demonstrate good strategies to decipher unfamiliar words and a willingness to persevere. They read regularly to an adult at school and most read regularly at home. In 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the national phonics screening check in Year 1 rose, though was still below the national average. Improved identification of pupils who have special educational needs and focused teaching ensured that the vast majority of Year 2 pupils achieved the expected phonics standard.

- In 2016, most pupils made better progress than in the previous year due to the improvement in teaching. However, progress was uneven across the school because of some weaker teaching in the past. By the time they left school, Year 6 pupils had made similar progress to the national average in reading and writing, but not in mathematics. Teachers have identified the gaps in pupils' earlier learning in mathematics, particularly in mathematical vocabulary and reasoning, and plan activities to meet the needs of current pupils.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years is well led and managed. Provision for children has improved since the new early years team was established a year ago and children are making better progress.
- Children start Nursery with skills and abilities that are, overall, below those typical for their age. Social and communication and language skills are particularly low. To increase children's opportunities to speak, listen and socialise, the small Nursery group is combined with the Reception class. Adults communicate with children in a consistent fashion and model speaking skills well. Parents are encouraged to join a session where adults model skills that parents should use at home.
- Children have a very wide range of ability levels in the early years. A significant number of new arrivals join the Reception class in September, again with lower than typical skills for their age overall. Teachers and teaching assistants make very good use of small-group sessions to help children with similar prior learning to make good progress. The proportion reaching a good level of development was maintained in 2016. Though below the national average, it represented good progress and better progress than the previous year, as the cohort started with much lower abilities. Local authority audits confirm the accuracy of the school's assessments.
- Safeguarding arrangements are fully secure and well known by staff. Adults look after children carefully so that children are happy and settle in quickly.
- Children learn classroom routines quickly. They develop self-confidence in the safe and secure environment of early years and learn how to do things for themselves. Children cooperated well with one another, building a 'boat' from cardboard boxes, for example, and tidied up the room with little prompting from adults.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have received training in a number of teaching skills, for example in how to help children who speak English as an additional language. Adults quickly identify children who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Good use is made of outside expert support.

- Teaching and assessment are good. Adults model skills and expected behaviour clearly. They maintain a calm approach and do not raise their voices. They manage children's behaviour well. Staff take every opportunity to engage children in conversation and to ask questions that challenge them to think hard. The outcomes of such interactions are recorded electronically and used to plan activities for the next steps in children's learning. Learning journals (examples of children's work) show clearly the good progress children are making. The school is encouraging parents to contribute more to this record.
- The inside area is organised to include activities linked to the theme introduced by adult-led sessions and to develop skills that are commonly weak. The display is colourful, with a good focus on literacy and numeracy, and celebrates children's work well. The outside environment has been improved and is an exciting space for children, with a good range of experiences on offer in all areas of learning. Children often choose activities outside, even in inclement weather. However, due to the awkward arrangement of the exit doors, children are less able to move easily between the inside and outside areas.

School details

Unique reference number	123094
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10012303

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Revd Philip Cochrane
Headteacher	Victoria Woods
Telephone number	01295 263026
Website	www.st-marys-banbury.oxon.sch.uk
Email address	office.3022@st-marys-banbury.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 July 2014

Information about this school

- This is smaller than an average-sized primary school. There is one class in each of Years 1 to 6, a part-time Nursery and a full-time Reception class.
- Just under half of pupils are of White British origin. The remainder come from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is just below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is just below the national average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including through observations of teaching, some of which were undertaken with the headteacher. Inspectors also scrutinised pupils' work in books across all year groups and subjects.
- Inspectors met with school staff, including the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff in charge of aspects of the school's work. Inspectors spoke with parents at the start and end of the school day. They spoke with three governors and consultants from the diocese and another local school.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils during two formal meetings as well as during lessons and breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation related to the school's work, including its development plan, self-evaluation report, records of monitoring of teaching and learning, and information about pupils' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour. Inspectors scrutinised records concerning safeguarding and toured the school site.
- Inspectors analysed the 31 responses and 22 written comments submitted to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, during the inspection. They also considered the 20 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

James McVeigh, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Corr	Ofsted Inspector

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