

Plympton St Mary's CofE Infant School

8 Market Road, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon PL7 1QW

Inspection dates

26–27 September 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across the school. As a result, pupils do not make good progress over time.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils in Key Stage 1 are not high enough. This means that they do not achieve as well as they should from their starting points.
- Teachers do not check quickly enough whether pupils know what to do or if they find the work they have been set too easy.
- In too many classes, pupils do not concentrate well, which impedes their progress.
- Teachers do not apply the school's policy on assessment and act swiftly to correct errors in pupils' work. As a result, pupils repeat their mistakes.
- Recently appointed middle leaders have not yet had an impact on improvement across the school.
- Governors have not monitored effectively the impact of funding provided to raise the achievement for disadvantaged pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has an accurate view of the school. She has dealt with many of the weaknesses in teaching that had caused outcomes to decline.
- Staff and parents recognise the positive changes that have been made. They agree that behaviour and communication have improved.
- Phonics teaching is improving. As a result, a higher proportion of pupils are achieving the standard expected in phonics.
- Children make a good start in the early years due to strong leadership and provision that is well matched to their needs.
- Strong teaching is supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school's Christian values permeate the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and improve pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and set work that is well matched to their abilities
 - teachers identify errors in pupils' work and act swiftly to ensure that they are not repeated, following the school's guidance
 - teachers check pupils' progress frequently and regularly, so that they can move pupils' learning on quickly.
- Further improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the recently created leadership team operates with maximum efficiency in order to improve outcomes for pupils
 - providing training and support for recently appointed leaders to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively
 - ensuring that all leaders, including governors, make greater use of assessment information to analyse the impact of teaching on particular groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils
 - building on and sharing the good practice in the early years.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school has been through an extended period of instability. During this time, the recently appointed headteacher had no leadership colleagues to drive improvements further. This team are now in place and working well together. Staff morale is high.
- The headteacher and governors have taken swift and decisive action to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching. Where particularly weak teaching has been identified in the school, the headteacher, supported by the governors, has taken strong and appropriate action to remedy inadequacies. However, they recognise that improvements are still needed.
- The headteacher has worked closely with other local schools, the local authority and the diocese to improve the school. As a result, pupils' progress is improving, but is still below that of pupils nationally.
- The headteacher recognises that not all leaders are yet skilled enough in monitoring and evaluating the impact that teaching has on pupils' achievements. She has rightly identified that leaders need further professional development to build their skills and confidence.
- Leaders, including governors, are aware that the school's current pupil premium strategy is not detailed enough. Leaders have not identified the barriers to pupils' learning and the reasons for the approaches to overcoming them that they have selected. They have not identified sharply enough how they will measure the success of their actions or the impact of their spending.
- Leaders evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses accurately. This enables them to prioritise the actions they need to improve the school. While leaders' actions are resulting in ongoing improvements to the school, they have not currently secured consistently good behaviour, teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- Effective systems are now in place to manage teachers' performance and to hold them to account for pupils' achievements. Regular reviews with teachers, at which the headteacher sets well-selected targets, are ensuring that teaching and pupils' progress are improving. For example, targets set in 2016 have had a direct impact on improving pupils' achievement in reading.
- Leaders have identified that the curriculum was not meeting the needs of the pupils and adapted it accordingly. They have improved the curriculum so that pupils benefit from a far wider range of experiences. This includes learning extensively about fundamental British values, such as democracy, tolerance and the rule of law. For example, pupils in Year 2 explored decision-making through debating 'should Cinderella go to the ball?'
- Leaders use the physical education (PE) and sports premium well to widen the range of activities that pupils take part in. This includes, for example, games such as 'disc golf' and developing healthy lifestyles through the 'Change for life' programme. Furthermore, the funding enables staff to develop their expertise in the teaching of physical education. The school benefits from taking part in the Plymouth Schools

Sports Partnership, which provides competitions. In addition, the sports partnership monitors and supports the quality of PE teaching across the school. As a result, pupils report that they enjoy PE and the activities they take part in.

- Parents who spoke with inspectors were very positive about the new leadership of the school. They are particularly pleased with the improvements in the way the school communicates with them. However, a small proportion of parents raised concerns that their children were not able to complete their homework because it required them to have a computer at home.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has recently been restructured and a large proportion of governors are new to their role. They support the school well and have not shied away from making difficult decisions to secure improvement and stabilise school staffing. However, the level of challenge to school leaders is not sufficiently robust to improve pupils' outcomes. Governors do not have a good understanding of the impact of the pupil premium on improving pupils' achievements.
- Governors use their regular visits to the school to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust and fit for purpose, including processes for recruitment of new staff. Governors regularly scrutinise the single central record to make sure that the necessary checks are carried out for all the adults who work with pupils in the school.
- Governors have a realistic view of how well the school is performing. They know more needs to be done and are ambitious and determined to achieve this.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff and governors are fully trained in all necessary areas and keep this training up to date. There is a culture of vigilance in keeping pupils safe. For example, robust recruitment processes ensure that a governor who is trained in safeguarding must oversee any appointment.
- Leaders work closely with a range of agencies and the local authority to make sure that pupils who are vulnerable are safe and well cared for.
- All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children are safe and well looked after while at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it does not consistently meet the needs of pupils in key stage 1. These pupils do not make good enough progress or achieve as well as they should.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. As a result, they often set tasks that are too easy. For example, pupils' books showed that some of the most able pupils had mastered work on calculations in mathematics. However,

teachers then set further tasks at the same levels of difficulty that did not require pupils to think deeply and develop their understanding further.

- Teachers do not consistently apply the school's assessment policy. The feedback they give does not always help pupils develop their learning. Often, feedback does not challenge pupils to think deeply about their work or extend their knowledge and understanding in line with the school's policy.
- Teachers do not check carefully enough pupils' progress during lessons. Consequently, they do not identify quickly enough when pupils are ready to move on to the next stage of their learning.
- The teaching of reading has improved over the past academic year. There is now a whole-school, systematic approach to the teaching of phonics.
- Handwriting is taught well across the school. As a result, the majority of pupils' work is neat and well presented.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled in supporting pupils who require individual support. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are able to take part in all that the school offers. These pupils make good progress as a result.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's Christian values are at the heart of all relationships. Pupils are kind and considerate, and treat each other with respect. They say that bullying is rare and that school is fun.
- Pupils value their roles as representatives on the school council and make good links with how democratic processes work. This helps them to develop an understanding of fundamental British values, such as tolerance and the rule of law.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and see the school as a safe environment. For example, throughout the inspection, pupils were confident enough to challenge inspectors to ensure that they were wearing the appropriate identification. They trust adults to deal with any concerns they may have.
- The before-school club is very well run. Staff are well trained and provide a wide range of healthy eating choices for pupils. The club offers a good range of activities, which stimulates the interests of the pupils, and prepares them well for the start of the school day.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Inspectors saw too many pupils who lacked concentration or who were engaging in low-level disruption in lessons because teachers were not providing them with sufficient challenge.
- The attendance of pupils has historically been in line with the national average.

However, information provided by the school identified that pupils' attendance was below the national averages in 2016, including for pupils who are persistently absent.

- During the inspection, pupils were welcoming to inspectors and courteous. They said that adults encourage good behaviour and enjoy rewards such as 'golden certificates' that are sent to their homes.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is not consistently good across the school. This is because teaching over time, although improving, is not yet good enough.
- In 2016, the progress of low- and middle-ability pupils at key stage 1 was below that found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. However, evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that progress is improving.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard at the end of key stage 1 was below the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Current assessment evidence suggests that in 2017 attainment has improved.
- In 2016, the most able pupils' progress and attainment at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics was also below the national average. The achievement of these pupils has improved in 2017, but they still do not consistently receive sufficient challenge.
- The small numbers of disadvantaged pupils at the school have made less progress in reading, writing and mathematics than other pupils have nationally in recent years. For current pupils, differences are diminishing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are achieving better than in previous years. Staff identify their needs accurately and provide them with skilled, effective support. As a result, these pupils are making good progress across the curriculum.
- Attainment in the Year 1 phonics screening check fell in 2016 and was below the national level. However, throughout 2017, the school has successfully focused on improving phonics teaching and as a result, pupils' achievement in phonics has improved.

Early years provision

Good

- A large proportion of children enter Reception with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age, with a small minority below. As a result of good teaching and strong leadership, they make good progress. By the time children leave the Reception classes, they are well prepared for the move to Year 1.
- Leadership of the early years is good. The recently appointed leader has a clear understanding of what is required to ensure that children achieve their very best. The leader's high expectations of children and staff are evident throughout the setting.
- Both the indoor and outdoor environments are well designed and stimulate children's interest and curiosity. During the inspection, a group of children were observed

learning to play basketball. They played cooperatively with each other as they attempted to score a basket. As a result of timely intervention from other adults, children developed their confidence, resilience and skills effectively.

- The early years curriculum includes attractive well-planned activities, which capture children's imagination and talents. It covers all areas of learning, with a strong focus on developing independence early to meet the school's vision of children becoming independent learners.
- The school has successfully designed animal characters, which help children understand how learning works. Examples of these are the 'motivated monkey' and 'creative chameleon'. Children were able to articulate clearly to inspectors the role of the characters in their learning and how they are helping them to develop.
- The early years leader has used pupil premium funding well and, as a result, disadvantaged children make similar progress to other children.
- Phonics teaching is effective. Children gain a good knowledge of phonics to support them with their reading and writing. They use their phonic knowledge well to read unfamiliar words.
- All welfare requirements are in place. All staff have had appropriate paediatric first aid training and safeguarding training to ensure that children are safe. Children know how to take responsibility for their own safety. When explaining to inspectors 'how to keep safe', their depth of knowledge was beyond that normally found in children of their age.
- Links with parents are very positive. Parents are very constructively involved in the initial assessments made when their children start at the school. As the academic year progresses, parents enthusiastically provide further information to the school to support detailed assessment of their children's progress.
- Leaders ensure a positive transition from nurseries and other early years providers and make sure that they have accurate information on children's skills and knowledge before they start school. They regularly visit these other settings and the homes of children, which provides them with valuable information, which they build on well.

School details

Unique reference number	113486
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10037022

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	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Reverend Rob Harris
Headteacher	Mrs Suzie Ottewell
Telephone number	01752 337912
Website	www.plymptonstmaryinfants.com
Email address	admin@stmarysinfants.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 January 2013

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about pupil premium on its website.
- The headteacher was appointed in July 2017.
- The school has a below-average proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium. The percentages of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language are below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who are supported by an education, health and care plan, is below the national average.
- The school is smaller than the average infant school.
- The school has received additional support from the diocese.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in lessons or part lessons, some jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at pupils' books during visits to lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the chair of the governing body and two other governors.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading in key stage 1.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, early years leader and other middle leaders.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the local authority, representatives from the Diocese and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors took into account 33 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including free-text responses. Additionally, inspectors met with parents informally at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors analysed the 19 responses to the online staff survey and 37 responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of information provided by school leaders. This included the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, various policies, and records of pupils' attendance, behaviour and academic performance.

Inspection team

Matt Middlemore, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Olford	Ofsted Inspector
Craig Hayes	Ofsted Inspector

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