

# St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

## Stockport

Roman Road, Heaton Norris, Stockport, Cheshire SK4 1RF

### Inspection dates

13–14 February 2018

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

- Pupils in key stage 2 have too many gaps in their reading, writing and mathematics skills.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable in key stage 2. In some cases, teachers' expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' work is too low.
- The most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to make better than expected progress. As a result, few attain the higher standards in reading and writing.
- Pupils' knowledge of the main faiths practised in Britain is cursory.
- The curriculum has breadth but lacks depth in subjects such as history and geography.
- Some subject leaders are very new to post and have not fully evaluated the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility. Opportunities for pupils to develop literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics are too variable across year groups.
- Some pupils are reliant on staff to help them to choose appropriate behaviour.
- Whole-school improvement plans lack specific criteria by which success can be measured.
- Leaders and governors are too generous in their evaluation of how well the school is doing.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has formed a new leadership team which has the determination and drive to improve all aspects of school. Governors are equally resolute to see the school succeed.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. They settle extremely well into school life, respond well to the interesting curriculum provided and make good progress.
- Pupils do well in the phonics screening tests in Year 1 and in the spelling, punctuation and grammar tests in Year 6.
- Leaders ensure that all pupils are safe in school. Staff work well with many external agencies to improve the home lives of vulnerable pupils and their families.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders, including governors, by:
  - eliminating the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching
  - closely monitoring the opportunities for pupils to develop English and mathematics skills across the wider curriculum
  - ensuring that the curriculum enables pupils to gain a good understanding of other faiths and cultures
  - embedding the use of measurable and specific targets so that leaders and governors can more easily evaluate ongoing school improvement across the course of the year
  - providing leaders with the time and the skills to evaluate how well their subjects are being taught and to measure the impact on pupils' progress
  - embedding the new behaviour strategy.
- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching, learning and assessment in order to improve pupil outcomes by:
  - accelerating pupils' progress by raising teachers' expectations of all groups of pupils
  - ensuring that agreed strategies for improving reading are implemented fully where pupils do not make enough progress
  - improving pupils' reading fluency and comprehension in key stage 1
  - ensuring that pupils' writing is of a consistently high standard
  - providing more opportunities for problem solving and investigative work in mathematics
  - provide opportunities to extend and challenge the most able pupils.

An external review of governance 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

- Leadership and management are not good because outcomes for pupils require improvement and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent across the school. As a result, pupils' progress and attainment are too variable, including for the most able pupils.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that targets for improvement are sufficiently measured or specific. This has hampered the monitoring of the effectiveness of actions across the course of the year. The deputy headteacher's time to monitor the quality of teaching and learning has been dramatically reduced because of the increased teaching commitment due to turbulence in staffing. As a result, pupils' progress has not been rapid enough, particularly across key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- There has been a period of unavoidable turbulence in staffing. This has had a particularly negative impact on outcomes for pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2. The headteacher and senior leaders have successfully introduced strategic change to provide more stable and appropriate staffing across the school. They have gained the confidence of all staff in a relatively short time and all are committed to ensuring that pupils reach their full potential.
- The headteacher and governors have appointed a talented new leadership team. Many are at an early stage in instigating change to accelerate improvements in their areas of responsibility. However, impact is already evident in improvements in the quality of the provision in the early years and key stage 1.
- Subject leaders have identified that pupils need to practise their reading, writing and mathematics skills more regularly. However, they do not monitor thoroughly enough the frequency and quality of the teaching of these skills across the curriculum.
- Arrangements for performance management are effective. Leaders and governors challenge underperformance. There are links with other schools to learn from their good practice but these links are at a relatively early stage of development.
- Leaders are working with the local authority to develop the curriculum so that subjects such as history and geography can be studied in more depth. Teachers develop personal, social and health education effectively within topic work. Assemblies and lessons enable pupils to learn about other cultures, tolerance and British values. However, the depth of knowledge of other faiths lacks depth. The headteacher has rightly prioritised a varied range of experiences, including out-of-school activities and trips, to further enrich the curriculum and broaden pupils' experiences.
- Leaders ensure that the pupil premium funding is used to benefit disadvantaged pupils. There are specific interventions to support learning and to enable this group of pupils to participate in a range of opportunities beyond school. During the last academic year, the progress of disadvantaged pupils across all year groups was similar to that of other pupils in the school but lower than other pupils nationally.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities requires improvement. The new leader of this area is now using additional funding well

to implement individual education pathways around the specific needs of pupils, with bespoke support from teachers and teaching assistants. When needed, the school sources external professional support from a wide range of agencies with whom staff work effectively, particularly with those pupils with very complex needs.

- Leaders use the specialist funding for physical education and sports to build pupils' confidence and teamwork. For example, there are coaching sessions from sports specialists who work with pupils and also develop the skills of staff.

## **Governance of the school**

- The governors' view of how well the school is doing is inflated. Although they know the main strengths and areas for development, the targets for improvement are not specific enough. They lack rigour in holding senior leaders to account. For example, the school improvement plan rightly refers to prioritising improving writing across the school. However, at the time of the inspection the review of progress in the autumn term had not been undertaken.
- The governors are visible around the school and clearly want the very best for pupils and their families. They are accurate in their view of how well staff work with pupils who have not achieved or settled in other schools. Governors recognise that much still needs to be achieved in order to raise pupils' achievement.
- Governors are supportive of the new headteacher and are eager to turn the school around. They have worked effectively with the headteacher to make new staff appointments and stabilise the significant turbulence caused by changes in staffing.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding at St Mary's. The school provides a safe and caring environment for pupils. School leaders recognise the significant challenges faced by individuals, some of whom have not settled well in other schools, and leaders put measures in place to ensure that all pupils stay safe.
- Leaders ensure that staff have received up-to-date safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. Members of staff are aware of the safeguarding procedures employed in the school. Records are well-maintained. Governors effectively fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.
- All statutory checks are in place to ensure the suitability of adults working in school. The site is secure and all visitors are made aware of the safeguarding policy on arrival. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they felt safe and this view was shared by parents who spoke to inspectors.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent across the school and across subjects. As a result, pupils do not make consistently good progress.

- The teaching of phonics is generally strong. However, some teaching assistants do not consistently challenge the most able, who have to wait for other pupils to complete their work before the whole group moves onto the next activity.
- Improving pupils' fluency in reading has been too variable over time, particularly in key stage 1. New books have recently been purchased to engage girls and boys alike. Year 2 pupils who read to the inspectors demonstrated their ability to work out unfamiliar words. However, weaknesses in pupils' fluency and comprehension of what they have read remain.
- Improving the teaching of writing is a priority for the school. Until recently, there was no handwriting policy. This is now established but has yet to be embedded across the school. Teachers' expectations of the quality and quantity of writing expected from pupils are inconsistent across different year groups and subjects.
- Teaching of mathematics is variable. Teachers do not use assessment to accurately pitch work to the ability of the pupils, and so pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. The most able pupils are not stretched and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to extend their learning through investigative and problem-solving work.
- Teaching does not consistently provide pupils, especially the most able, with enough challenge to achieve work of the highest standard. There is often a lack of challenge or depth. Others find work too hard because of gaps in their knowledge.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the whole curriculum in every year group. For example, in some theme books, extended writing opportunities show that the expectations of teachers varied in terms of the quality and quantity of pupils' work. Through scrutiny of pupils' work, it is evident that on occasions teachers are too generous in their assessment of pupils' writing.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The school documentation states that the governor with particular responsibility for safeguarding has identified that more needs to be done in respect of promoting anti-bullying. The inspectors spoke to pupils both informally and in meetings and they demonstrated a thorough understanding of different forms of bullying. However, several commented on the fact that name-calling is frequent and thus the need to embed the school's new behaviour policy.
- Each half term, pupils explore a British value and this is evident from displays in the school and in talking to pupils. The vast majority attended church on Ash Wednesday and understood the significance of this. Although pupils told inspectors that they respect those who are different to themselves, they had very limited understanding of the main faiths and cultures practised across Britain today.

- Staff work well with pupils who have not settled in other schools. They ensure that there is appropriate support both in the classroom and at breaktimes. Leaders work with a range of external agencies to provide support for potentially vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Parents are confident that their children are well cared for. They commented that 'the school is a family which children love being a part of'.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Teaching assistants and senior staff supervise pupils at lunchtimes to ensure consistency in support and the expectations around pupils' behaviour. Staff are effective in encouraging pupils to choose appropriate behaviours.
- In order to accelerate improvements in behaviour, senior leaders are in the process of introducing a new traffic lights system across the school.
- Most of the time, most pupils behave well. They listen attentively, work productively and there is an active 'buzz' as pupils engage in a range of activities. For some individual pupils, for whom good behaviour is difficult, the school works well with outside agencies to provide specialist and successful support.
- The vast majority of pupils attend regularly and attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The school is working effectively with the small minority of families whose children have too many absences which interrupt their progress and opportunities to be well prepared for the next stage in their education. These efforts are resulting in an improvement in the attendance of those who are persistently absent.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because there are significant gaps in pupils' learning. These gaps have not been identified early enough and too much time is spent catching up when the pupils reach Year 6. The progress of pupils is not consistently good.
- The published assessment information should be read with caution. The high turnover of pupils means that a significant number who finish Year 2 are not the same as those who started in early years. In 2017, the proportion reaching the expected standard in phonics was slightly higher than the national average. At the end of key stage 1, the proportion reaching the expected standard was lower than the national average in reading and writing but closer to the national average in mathematics. The progress of pupils who have had the benefit of early years provision at this school is generally good.
- Since the dip in 2016, key stage 2 pupils' outcomes have improved. Attainment, however, remains low in writing. The proportion reaching the expected standards in mathematics was closer to the national average and reading was higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in spellings, punctuation and grammar was much higher than the national average, but

this is not reflected in their writing in English and across other subjects such as history and geography. The school's assessments, verified by pupils' work, indicate that pupils currently in key stage 1 are benefiting from a better quality of teaching. Pupils work in key stage 2 illustrates the impact of turbulence in staffing.

- The school's tracking system shows that across the school pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate. There are clear signs that stronger outcomes at the end of the early years and in Year 1 phonics are being built upon as pupils move through the school.
- Over time too few of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, reach the standards that they should for their age and ability. However, recent changes to teaching are beginning to help these pupils make greater progress. Nonetheless, there is more to do to ensure that they gain greater depth in their learning.
- Despite the school's efforts, some pupils do not read regularly at home and/or for pleasure and this hinders their progress in other subjects. The school goes to great lengths to compensate for this. The proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected standard in reading in 2017 was greater than the national average. Leaders have recently purchased new books to update the library. Pupils' progress in fluency in reading is not good enough in key stage 1.
- Scrutiny of disadvantaged pupils' work in their books, listening to them read and evaluating case studies show that they are beginning to catch up in their learning. Some disadvantaged pupils also have complex needs.
- Some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have shown that their progress is improving. A new leader in this area is working well with external agencies and school staff to provide bespoke support for individual pupils.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- Leadership and teaching in early years are effective. From their low starting points, particularly in communication and language, children make good progress. The proportion of children in 2017 that achieved a good level of development was in line with the national average, demonstrating an improving picture over the last three years.
- The leaders' assessment, and tracking of children's attainment and progress has enabled them to revise the curriculum to plug any gaps in children's understanding. The curriculum is broad and balanced and based strongly on children's interests and extending their experiences. Leaders have a very good overview of the assessment data and of children and their families.
- One of the reasons why the quality of the teaching in the early years is higher than in the main school is because teaching is more effective. Most children learn well in Nursery and Reception classes. The classrooms and outdoor areas are well resourced and have a good range of equipment to inspire children to explore, play and learn. Children choose areas and equipment to use and work well with others to extend their imagination. The headteacher and governors have made a new appointment of a leader of key stage 1 and early years combined. This is resulting in improvements to the quality of teaching now being seen in key stage 1.

- From their low starting points, particularly in communication and language, children in early years make good, and some better, progress. The proportion of children in 2017 that achieved a good level of development was in line with the national average, demonstrating an improving picture over the last three years.
- Staff effectively planned the opportunity for children in Reception class to make pancakes on Shrove Tuesday. Children developed their numeracy skills by weighing ingredients and staff encouraged them to talk about each step of the recipe. The next day the teacher used this activity to encourage children to write the order in which they had gone about making their pancakes. Staff made the development of writing fun for the children.
- Behaviour is good. Excellent transition arrangements prior to starting school lead to children settling extremely well into school life and routines. During the inspection it was clear to see how happy the children are to come to school and this was reflected in conversations with parents.
- Welfare requirements are met. The provision is well staffed. It is a safe environment and all statutory school policies are in place, ensuring that pupils are safe and feel safe.

## School details

Unique reference number	106124
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10045161

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Saunders
Headteacher	Paul Towey
Telephone number	0161 480 5319
Website	<a href="http://www.st-marysrc.stockport.sch.uk/">www.st-marysrc.stockport.sch.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:headteacher@st-marysrc.stockport.sch.uk">headteacher@st-marysrc.stockport.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	18–19 February 2014

## Information about this school

- St Mary's is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.
- There is higher-than-average mobility for pupils joining St Mary's other than at the usual times.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum requirement for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. Several sessions were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read and held formal and informal discussions with pupils.
- Pupils' work in their books and tracking records were scrutinised with the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings held with senior leaders, members of the governing body, curriculum leaders and the inclusion manager.
- There were not enough responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to generate a report. Consideration was given to free-text responses from seven parents and inspectors met with parents at the school gates to seek their views. Inspectors considered 18 staff questionnaires. There were no responses to the pupils' questionnaire.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents. These included the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents, pupils' tracking information, subject leaders' documents, minutes of the local governing committee meetings, safeguarding documentation and various records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Shutt

Ofsted Inspector

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