

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Swanage

Northbrook Road, Swanage, Dorset BH19 1QE

Inspection dates

10–11 October 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	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not been successful in maintaining an outstanding standard of education for pupils. The governing body has not challenged the decline in the school's performance effectively or quickly enough.
- The curriculum is not sufficiently challenging. Leaders do not check that the planned curriculum is implemented suitably. Curriculum coverage has been weak in the past.
- Senior and middle leaders' checks on teaching and learning have not picked up weaknesses in teaching quickly. Teaching does not enable pupils to make good progress over time. There are too many inconsistencies in teaching for the quality of education to be good.
- The teaching of reading is not consistently strong. Some pupils do not read with accuracy and understanding and are not yet catching up.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils receive the same quality of experiences across the school. Some pupils in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 underachieve. At the end of key stage 2, teaching ensures that pupils catch up in English and mathematics. However, too few pupils make strong progress from their starting points in other subjects, for example science.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of their pupils. Teaching does not demand enough of pupils. Middle-attaining and the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. As a result, pupils' progress slows.
- Teachers' assessments are not used well enough to match teaching to pupils' needs. Some low-attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and or disabilities, do not catch up quickly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is recovering quickly after a period of sustained decline. The actions of the acting headteacher and precisely focused internal support from the trust are bringing about much needed improvement.
- Pupils' attendance is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Pupils are respectful and kind to one another.
- The early years foundation stage prepares most children for Year 1 well. Children settle quickly and enjoy 'big school'.
- Most pupils leave the school with skills and knowledge at or above that expected nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The sport curriculum is effective and plays a key part in keeping pupils healthy.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the local governing board is rigorous in its challenge to school leaders so that a culture of continuous improvement is built successfully
 - leadership of the curriculum is strong so that any gaps in curriculum coverage and depth are resolved quickly
 - inconsistencies in teaching across year groups and phases are eradicated
 - senior and middle leaders' checks on teaching are thorough and ensure that pupils make consistently strong progress from their starting points
 - senior and middle leaders' actions result in teachers' expectations that are consistently high for their pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teaching builds on what pupils know, can do and understand, to ensure that middle-attaining and the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged, so that they fulfil their potential
 - pupils who have previously low attainment and those who have SEN and or disabilities receive work that is closely matched to their needs, so that they make good progress and catch up
 - the teaching of reading is consistently strong, so that those pupils who have previously underachieved read accurately, comprehend well and gain a full understanding of what they read
 - teaching in a wide range of subjects ensures that pupils gain the knowledge and skills that are expected for their age, so that they are well prepared for their next stage
 - teachers use their assessments to adapt their teaching, so that teaching is closely matched to pupils' needs and all groups of pupils learn well.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The acting headteacher is working week on week to turn the school's weaknesses around. However, over several years, leaders did not pick up weaknesses in the school's effectiveness quickly enough. As a result, teaching and pupils' progress remain too inconsistent as pupils move through the school. Some pupils underachieve.
- Leaders did not keep up to date with changes to national expectations. As a result, the curriculum at the school is not sufficiently challenging. In the past, there has been limited strategic planning of the school curriculum. Teachers' autonomy to plan the curriculum for their class has resulted in some subjects not being taught in sufficient depth and breadth. This, over time, has hindered pupils' knowledge and understanding of subjects such as science, humanities and modern foreign languages in key stage 2.
- An internal review by the trust of whole-school effectiveness has brought clarity to school-improvement initiatives. However, it took time for leaders and governors to accept that changes were needed. As a result, some actions are only now being addressed fully. This slowed the school improvement journey. However, leaders' strong communication about the improvements that are required means that momentum is being built and staff morale is high this year. Increasingly, teachers are working collaboratively with the trust to make the rapid improvements required.
- Leaders' checks on teaching and learning have not enabled pupils to make consistently good progress. In the past, teachers did not receive precise enough feedback to help them identify improvements. Very recent improvements to the way leaders conduct their checks on teaching and learning are already making a notable difference. However, this work is very recent and so is not yet having the impact needed to improve pupils' outcomes over time.
- Leaders have not ensured that teachers' expectations are uniformly high. Teaching is not challenging enough in some, but not all, classes. Consequently, the most able and middle-attaining pupils tackle work that is too easy before they complete work that is sufficiently challenging.
- In recent weeks, the English and mathematics leaders have responded positively to training to sharpen their roles and responsibilities. They are developing the way that they check pupils' progress across the school. This is providing greater clarity to the way they work. There are early signs of improvement in teachers' subject knowledge and skills. However, this work is very recent and so more time is required for it to have sufficient impact on improving pupils' progress.
- As a result of training, the leader of SEN and/or disabilities has brought school systems up to date successfully. Consequently, pupils' individual targets are more closely matched to their needs and record-keeping has improved. However, leaders' checks on teaching are not yet as secure as they need to be to. As a result, some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not receive the right work in lessons and are not catching up quickly enough.
- The sports premium is used exceptionally well. Sport is integral to the daily timetable. Pupils enjoy the daily run, skipping challenges and the wide range of competitive and

team sports on offer.

- Leaders use the pupil premium funding precisely. Leaders track the impact of funding well. However, the progress of some current disadvantaged pupils remains uneven as a result of the inconsistent teaching they receive over time.
- The curriculum provides wide-ranging opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development. The school sits at the heart of the community. Links are strong, with pupils being actively involved in a full range of events and activities across the year.
- Teachers are very positive about current leaders' improved communications. The staff team are responding quickly to remedy any weaknesses in teaching, with increasing success.
- Almost every parent or carer who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, would recommend the school. However, a minority of parents raise concern about the information they receive about their child's progress and how well the school follows up concerns.

Governance of the school

- The review of governance undertaken by the trust has not yet had the impact needed. The local governing body does not yet provide school leaders with sufficient challenge. It has taken time for it to accept the need for substantial improvement to the way it works. Recent changes to the leadership of the governing body are already bringing about positive change. However, they are too recent to assess the impact of this work.
- Governors do hold leaders to account for the use of pupil premium and sports funding. However, governors have not held leaders to account for the impact or rapidity of whole-school improvement over several years.
- Governors have been successful in securing interim leadership arrangements for the school. However, there is currently no substantive headteacher.
- The trust has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A comprehensive menu of school-improvement support is in place and beginning to make a positive difference. However, support from the trust has not secured good-quality teaching, leadership and achievement over time.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Since in post, the acting headteacher has updated school systems and ensured that all staff training is in place. As a result, safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and in line with current legislation. Actions from a recent safeguarding audit have been tackled promptly. The school's single central record and vetting procedures for staff recruitment are in line with requirements.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Staff apply their training well to keep pupils safe. All staff spoken to on the inspection knew exactly what to do if they had any concerns to prevent pupils' risk of harm. Safeguarding records are organised meticulously. Leaders with the designated responsibility for safeguarding are

competent in working with external agencies and proactive and timely in the referrals they make.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is too variable; some teachers do not yet have the skills and knowledge to teach subjects well. In particular, low-attaining pupils do not always get the support they need to catch up, because tasks are not matched to their needs.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Teaching does not enable pupils to deepen their understanding of curriculum concepts well enough over time. All too often, activities are planned as disconnected tasks. Pupils enjoy these activities. However, the incoherence of curriculum planning across key stages means that sometimes teaching lacks purpose, or progression over time. As a result, some middle-attaining and the most able pupils underachieve.
- Teaching assistants provide caring and kind support. This enables pupils to maintain concentration in lessons. However, teachers do not deploy their teaching assistants consistently well or have high enough expectations of what can be achieved. As a result, their support does not have the impact it should on raising pupils' academic outcomes. At times, pupils are overly reliant on adult support. This limits their progress over time.
- Leaders' strategies to improve the teaching of reading are beginning to pay off. This has resulted in pupils' keenness to read regularly. Some pupils still have gaps in their knowledge because of previously weak teaching. Leaders do not yet have a clear picture of whether teaching is successful across the school, because their checks on assessment and teaching are not thorough.
- The teaching of the wider curriculum is not well organised. The progression of what is taught is not good enough. For example, the teaching of science is not challenging enough in some classes. As a result, some work is far too easy and does not deepen pupils' understanding. In other classes, pupils find it difficult to access work because activities planned are not matched to curriculum requirements. Sometimes, teaching assumes pupils' prior knowledge of concepts, when they have not been previously covered.
- The current teaching of mathematics is improving quickly. As a result, in upper key stage 2 previous weaknesses in pupils' knowledge are being remedied. However, current teaching in some classes elsewhere is not yet enabling pupils to have good fluency in mathematics. This limits pupils' ability to reason and problem-solve in some classes. Some girls do not have the confidence to use and apply mathematical concepts with confidence. Too few girls enter upper key stage 2 with the skills and knowledge expected for their age. As a result, their progress remains too fragile.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils say that bullying is rare. When pupils do have concerns, they say that adults sort out issues quickly and supportively.
- There is a strong culture of care and support. The school motto 'Be Loving and Truthful' shines through in much of the school's work. Pupils are respectful to one another and consistently polite.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They take their additional responsibilities very seriously. There are ample opportunities to develop pupil leadership. For example, these are available through the 'green team', the 'school council' and choir. Pupils value the wide-ranging clubs on offer. Links with a primary school in Uganda also help pupils develop understanding of the wider world.
- The sports curriculum supports pupils' personal development and their physical and mental health well. There are a multitude of opportunities for pupils to play sport.
- Breakfast club is safe and orderly. No food is served. However, pupils enjoy the activities at this social time, including sporting activities outside. Small numbers of pupils attend the after-school club. Pupils settle quickly and enjoy time to relax.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Typically, pupils are motivated to learn and make the most of the activities on offer. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and generally present their work well. Pupils' positive attitudes persist, even when work is not challenging enough. They are resilient and try hard. However, there are occasions when pupils can be too compliant, or when pupils, in younger years, lose concentration in lessons because teaching is not closely matched to their needs.
- Pupils' attendance over a number of years is good. Effective systems are in place to check up when pupils are absent. Few pupils are persistently absent. However, robust systems in place mean that persistent absenteeism is reducing even further.
- There have been no exclusions in recent years.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The progress current pupils make as they move through the school, including that of disadvantaged pupils, is too inconsistent. By the end of key stage 2, across several years, pupils make average progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Some pupils underachieve in lower key stage 2 and to a lesser extent in key stage 1. Teaching in upper key stage 2 overcompensates for previously inconsistent teaching. As a result, while some pupils catch up in Years 5 and 6, pupils' progress across the school is too uneven.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the standards that are required in the phonics screening checks in Year 1 has been in line with the national average for the past two years. Current pupils' progress in phonics is too variable, because teaching does not consistently meet their needs well enough. Pupils' application of phonics to spell

accurately is not yet good. Weaknesses in pupils' spelling remain across key stage 2.

- Pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 improved in reading and mathematics this year. However, improvement was not seen to the same extent in writing. Current pupils who have previously lower-than-average attainment and those who have average attainment, do not make the progress they should in writing. Some of the most able pupils coast along in their writing until they reach upper key stage 2. Leaders are not yet remedying this weakness quickly enough.
- The proportion of pupils at the end of key stage 2 with the skills and knowledge expected for their age in reading dipped steeply in 2016 and 2017. In 2018, there has been strong improvement. However, current pupils make inconsistent progress as they travel through the school. Leaders' systems to check teachers' assessments in reading are not good enough. Therefore, some weaknesses in the teaching and assessment of reading go unchecked.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and those pupils who have below-average attainment do not catch up quickly enough in reading and writing. These pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills. Interventions are not yet resolving these weaknesses successfully.
- Leaders' strategies to raise pupils' attainment in reading writing and mathematics after a dip in 2016, when higher expectations were seen in the curriculum, have been successful. As a result, the proportion of pupils who have skills and knowledge at or above those typical for their age is high this year. However, the success of high attainment in core subjects masks the mediocre expectations around other curriculum subjects such as science, design technology and humanities. So, pupils' underachievement continues. Recent work this year is beginning to raise expectations around coverage of the curriculum. However, it is still too early to see the impact on pupils' outcomes.
- In three out of four years, the proportions of children who have skills and knowledge in line with their age by the end of Reception year has been above the national average. However, there remains a difference between the proportions of boys and girls who meet the early learning goals.

Early years provision

Good

- Teaching in the early years has a strong impact in cultivating children's positive attitudes to learning. Well-established routines mean that children settle quickly and enjoy the curriculum on offer. Children behave and respond well to the clear boundaries set for them.
- Individualised assessments on entry are ensuring that teaching, as soon as children arrive, is closely matched to children's needs. Teaching motivates and interests pupils. Consequently, children show curiosity and willingness to practise new skills.
- The teaching of phonics in the early years is regular and systematic. Children practise these early reading and writing skills in the outdoor learning area. Children are keen to apply their early mark-making and word-writing skills. However, on occasions when children explore and experiment with their learning, adults do not notice or build on children's achievements. On such occasions, adults' assessments are not used precisely

to deepen children's understanding.

- Most children in Reception are prepared well for Year 1. As a result, their knowledge and skills have been sustained into Year 1 overall. Strong transition arrangements exist during the summer term to ensure that onward teachers and staff understand pupils' needs. However, Reception and Year 1 teachers' follow-up to transition activities this term has not been as thorough as they could be.
- For those children who enter Reception with speaking skills below those typical for their age, the school is providing specific support. However, specific support for children who benefit from pupil premium funding is not yet having the swift impact that it needs to on developing children's communication and language skills. Leaders have already identified this, but more time is required to establish teaching that enables these children to catch up quickly.

School details

Unique reference number	140780
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10020053

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	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	James Porter
Headteacher	Maria Gadston
Telephone number	01929 424909
Website	www.stmarysswanage.dorset.sch.uk/
Email address	office@stmarysswanage.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary school is a smaller-than-average primary school. It is part of the Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust. The trust formed in April 2014. The work of the trust is overseen by a board of directors. The trust is responsible for one nursery, 32 primary schools and two secondary schools, across seven local authorities in the south west region.
- The predecessor school was graded as outstanding at its previous inspection in 2007.
- There is an acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. There is a new chair of the local governing board.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive special educational needs support is just above the national average. The proportion who have an education, health and care plan is in

line with the national average.

- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in visits to lessons across the school, and reviewed pupils' work in books and curriculum plans. The inspection team worked in close partnership with leaders to review pupils' progress and provision over time.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils to seek their views about the school. Inspectors also listened to the views of many pupils during lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors listened to pupils from Years 2, 3 and 6 reading.
- Inspectors held meetings with the acting headteacher, acting deputy headteacher and middle leaders in the school. Inspectors met with representatives of the trust and held a meeting with the local governing board. A further meeting took place with the new chair of governors. A telephone conversation was held with the chief executive officer for the trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of school documents including: the school's action plans; the school's view of its own performance; pupils' performance information; governors' minutes; records relating to behaviour; checks on teaching and learning; pupils' attendance information; and a range of safeguarding records.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at lunchtimes and breaktimes and around the school.
- Inspectors considered 55 responses to the online survey Parent View. Inspectors also talked to parents during the inspection to seek their views of the school and of the education their children receive. Inspectors met with a range of staff to gather their views.
- An inspector visited the breakfast and after-school clubs.

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alexander Baxter	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Fortey	Ofsted Inspector

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