

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

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

Inspection dates

26–27 March 2019

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

- Since the previous inspection, governors and the new headteacher have worked tirelessly to improve the school. The quality of education pupils receive is good.
- In key stage 2, pupils achieve well. They make good progress and, by the end of key stage 2, are well prepared for the move to secondary school.
- In key stage 1, pupils are making good progress in reading and writing. Although improving, pupils are not yet reaching the same standards in mathematics.
- Year 1 mathematical activities are not meeting the needs of the most able pupils.
- The curriculum across the school is well planned. Pupils learn about a range of interesting topics. Handwriting and presentation are better in key stage 2.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve very well. In 2018, the proportion that reached the required standard by the end of Year 6 is better than that found nationally.
- Pupil's attendance is improving but remains below the national average. There were too many fixed-term exclusions, but they have reduced since January.
- Children are happy and settled in the early years class. They learn in a vibrant and exciting environment. In 2018, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development was above the national average.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment rigorously, which has ensured that it is now good.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have a good knowledge and understanding of British values.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is woven into school life at every opportunity.
- There are positive and caring relationships between adults and pupils. This has had an encouraging impact on pupils' learning.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and well-mannered. Their behaviour in lessons, on the playground and as they move around the school is of a good standard.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve pupils' achievement in key stage 1 by:
 - providing appropriately interesting activities in mathematics for the most able pupils to excel
 - adults insisting on the highest standard of presentation and handwriting across all subjects.
- Improve attendance by:
 - continuing to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions
 - exploring innovative ways to support and encourage parents and carers to bring their children to school regularly and to arrive on time, so overall attendance increases to a least the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, governors have accurately identified the areas for improvement and have made the necessary changes. Since her appointment in January 2019, the headteacher has hastened the pace of change. Significant improvements are evident. The headteacher has quickly strengthened a cohesive team whose members work well together and share her high aspirations for securing rapid improvements.
- Where leaders have introduced new approaches to teaching writing and mathematics, these are proving successful. Pupils are making better progress as a result, particularly in key stage 2. Leaders check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment regularly and support staff to improve their practice further. This is helping the quality of teaching to continue to improve and become more consistent.
- Senior leaders know the school well. They have an accurate view of where the school's strengths are and what needs to be done to improve still further. Their plans are precise and detailed with appropriate actions for improvement. They refine plans if necessary and ensure that all staff are committed to the actions to be carried out.
- Middle leaders are becoming increasingly effective. They check the quality of education in the subject they lead and make changes where necessary. Middle leaders are very committed and enthusiastic for their role. They are starting to provide staff with suitable training to enhance the provision for pupils in each subject area.
- Leaders are meticulous in using their chosen tracking system to identify the progress the pupils make in all subjects. Teachers use the information they gather to target support for pupils who are in danger of falling behind. This means that the majority of pupils make good progress, especially pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged. In 2018, by the end of key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils achieved better than other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics combined.
- The provision for supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and culture development is highly effective. The school has close links with the local church. Pupils have many opportunities to reflect on Christian values and how these values support them in everyday life. Pupils learn about a wide range of faiths and cultures and staff encourage them to make links about what is different and what is the same in their lives. Pupils have opportunities to listen to speakers who promote and help them reflect on the school's values, such as justice and fairness.
- This is an inclusive school. Pupils and adults welcome all members of the school community warmly, irrespective of their beliefs.
- The headteacher is mindful that not all pupils at the school are able to participate in everyday life experiences. So, as part of the school's wider curriculum, pupils have such opportunities, including, for example, going to the theatre or taking a walk along the river bank.
- Pupils have opportunities to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and sports clubs. The sport premium funding is used well to foster positive engagement in a number of sports clubs. Teachers have had additional training to improve the

teaching of physical education. Pupils attend a number of different sports clubs and are involved in many sports competitions. Pupils' physical activity and fitness levels are also improved with a daily activity which pupils talk about with enthusiasm.

- Leaders use the pupil premium funding well to address the needs of the large number of disadvantaged pupils who attend. They use the funding creatively so that pupils make better progress from their starting points. However, the attendance of some disadvantaged pupils is lower than the national average and remains an area to improve.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is designed well and is interesting. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to write at length while still learning key knowledge and skills for the subject they are studying. For example, when learning about the Tudors, pupils' study local history and art, as well as writing a biography of Henry VIII. Pupils' work is celebrated around the school and is of a high standard across a range of different subjects.
- A very high percentage of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that the school is well led and managed. They appreciate the care and support their children receive. A number of comments praised the recent changes the new headteacher has made.

Governance of the school

- Since the last inspection, governors, supported by the local authority, have taken decisive action to address the weaknesses in school leadership.
- The governors have an insightful and extensive knowledge of the needs of the school. They work tirelessly to hold leaders to account for the school's performance. This has led to rapid and significant improvements.
- They are passionate about improving outcomes for the pupils. They demonstrate a clear understanding of where improvements have been made and have clear plans of action to make sure this continues.
- Governors ensure that school finances and additional government funding are used well to support the progress of all groups of pupils.
- Governors have an impressive range of skills and areas of expertise. They are rightly proud of the improvements they have driven. However, they are not complacent and know there is still work to do, particularly around attendance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is central to everything the school does. Thorough checks are carried out on all adults that work at the school. All leaders ensure that the school meets requirements for recruiting and appointing new employees.
- Staff are regularly trained, and leaders keep detailed records of training. Staff can talk about the processes for reporting concerns. The chosen recording system used by the school is seen as a valuable tool for keeping all information in one place.
- Leaders respond immediately to concerns raised. They track the progress of any

concerns raised and work effectively and swiftly with a variety of agencies when they need to.

- Of the responses to Parent View, 96% of parents agreed their children feel safe at school and are well cared for.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and talk confidently about the activities that promote this. A recent visit from a local community police officer (PCSO) emphasised the importance of e-safety. Pupils learn about keeping safe when online in their computer lessons. Pupils regularly help each other to keep safe, particularly on the playground.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The curriculum is well planned to ensure that pupils engage in topics that they enjoy learning. The way that staff build pupils' skills and knowledge year on year can be seen in the pupils' work.
- Teachers connect learning together so that pupils can see how geographical skills and historical skills can support their understanding of topics such as the Industrial Revolution. Equally, when learning about the moon landing, pupils explore the historical event and also learn about planets and the solar system in science. This helps pupils consolidate their understanding and make better progress.
- Presentation in books in key stage 2 is neat and adults ensure that pupils try hard and complete their work well. In key stage 1, this is not consistently the case. Adults do not insist on the highest standards of presentation and handwriting, and so pupils are not learning the importance of these key skills as well as they should.
- Overall, since the previous inspection, teaching, learning and assessment have improved. The strongest progress has been in key stage 2. The rate of progress, although improving, has not been as strong in key stage 1, particularly in mathematics. However, there is now an increased proportion of current pupils in Year 2 working at age-related expectations.
- The introduction of a new way of teaching mathematics has led to an increase in pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts. Pupils have regular opportunities to practise a range of calculations and are encouraged to reason why they know their answers are correct or not.
- Teachers use resources well to support pupils in their writing. Pupils use these effectively. For example, the introduction of 'models' and 'scaffolds' are leading to improvements across the school. Pupils say that these resources help them understand how to present their writing. Pupils in Year 6 talk about the sequence of writing and how editing is a powerful tool to improve their work when they create the opening for a scary story.
- In Year 2, pupils appreciate the sharing of ideas to improve their own written work. Pupils use their plans effectively to support their written work. Adults support pupils and provide useful feedback to help them improve their work further.
- The use of high-quality texts as a stimulus for writing across the school has led to an increased enthusiasm for pupils' writing. They are proud of the writing they produce. In

key stage 2, pupils present their work to a high standard.

- When younger pupils read, they use their knowledge of sounds to help them with challenging words. Pupils are given opportunities to read regularly at school. Some pupils enjoy reading regularly to a dedicated group of well-trained volunteers. All these strategies are helping pupils make rapid gains in their reading skills.
- Learning support assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Their work is becoming increasingly focused on pupils' specific areas of learning need within classes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- This is an inclusive school. All pupils, regardless of the faith, culture or learning needs are welcomed and supported. The staff work tirelessly to ensure that respect and acceptance of difference are embraced.
- Staff are sensitive to the needs of individual pupils. Personalised learning, in all areas of the curriculum, is quickly becoming established as the culture of the school. Pupils are extremely respectful and actively encourage each other to do well.
- Some pupils receive support for social and emotional needs in a lunchtime club. They practise starting conversations, listening well and taking turns. Pupils are growing in self-confidence as a result.
- Staff work with an extensive range of external agencies to offer support for families who require it.
- Leadership roles for the pupils are increasing. The school council members are widely involved in school life and decision making. Currently, they are consulting with their peers to decide which charities to support in the future. Pupils relish the responsibility of being a play leader, supporting younger pupils at playtime and lunchtime. New responsibilities have been introduced, such as prefects and worship prefects. Pupils have a good understanding of British values and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are happy. Their love of their school is highly evident. One pupil said, 'I would recommend this school to anyone I know.' Pupils are polite, friendly and well-mannered. They are a credit to their school. The pupils are confident to introduce themselves and talk about their learning.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are rare. When they do occur, or staff sense they are about to happen, they quickly employ a strategy to de-escalate the situation. Using a range of distraction techniques enables other pupils to continue with their learning. Pupils re-engage with their learning quickly.
- This term, since the arrival of the new headteacher, the number of fixed-term

exclusions has fallen. This is a significant achievement. Pupils are now managed effectively by leaders, teachers and support staff to ensure that pupils are not excluded. When pupils need a brief respite from their classroom environment they are expertly enabled to quickly re-engage with their learning. Pupils achieve this aim successfully.

- Although attendance is improving, it is still below the national average. Leaders have been relentless in improving this. A small number of pupils do not attend school regularly or arrive on time. The school is seeking creative ways to support parents so that attendance rates improve to meet, at least, national expectations.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- This is a small school, so comparisons for groups of pupils with national standards should be treated with caution.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 has improved since the last inspection. Outcomes for pupils in reading and mathematics in 2018 were above the national averages. Although writing was still below the national average, there has been significant improvement year on year since 2016. The combined attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has improved significantly over time and was above the national average.
- In key stage 1, outcomes in reading and writing have improved since 2016. Outcomes in reading are now higher than the national average although still below the national average for writing. In mathematics, there has been a decline since 2016 and outcomes are well below the national averages. However, at the time of the inspection, the number of pupils in Year 2 working at age-related expectations was much improved.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 statutory phonics screening check is lower than the national average. In 2018, the outcomes for the school were higher than in previous years. The school is addressing this through refocussing phonics teaching and additional lessons to meet pupils' needs and bridge any gaps they may have in learning.
- Pupils' writing is rapidly developing fluency and maturity as they move through the school, particularly in key stage 2. They write regularly and at length and across a range of subjects. The implementation of a spelling focus across the school is ensuring that pupils are gaining confidence in spelling complex words and including them in their writing. However, presentation and handwriting in key stage 1 are not yet good enough.
- Pupils study a wide range of subjects. Work in pupils' books in subjects other than English and mathematics shows that pupils achieve well across the curriculum.

Early years provision

Good

- Over the past three years, the outcomes for children in the early years have improved and in 2018 the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development was above the national average. This year, children are continuing to make good progress

from their starting points.

- Children join the early years class with varied starting points. The current intake is small, with 14 children joining in September 2018. From their individual starting points, the majority of children are making good progress, with some making exceptional progress. Children start their school life well in a safe and happy learning environment.
- The early years teacher knows the children well. She has implemented a comprehensive assessment system that she uses effectively to plan interesting learning opportunities for all children. She has mechanisms to support pupils with SEND, who are catered for appropriately so that they can access learning and make good progress.
- Positive relationships between all adults and children are central to the well-being of children in the early years environment. For example, in an outdoor activity with a learning support assistant, children remained engaged for a sustained period of time and had the opportunity to practise their phonics skills.
- The indoor and outside learning environments promote positive learning experiences effectively. Both are well organised and resourced and are bright and attractive. Adults encourage children to participate in a range of learning activities that supports their development.
- Links with parents are effective and there are regular opportunities when parents are welcomed in to school to celebrate the achievements of the children. Children are very proud of their achievements and enjoy sharing their many accomplishments.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective. Staff are appropriately qualified to meet the statutory requirements for ensuring children's welfare.

School details

Unique reference number	117497
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10058673

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Hoile
Headteacher	Helen Melidoro
Telephone number	01707 690500
Website	www.stmarys565.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@stmarys565.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 September 2016

Information about this school

- St Mary's Church of England Primary is a smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The headteacher was appointed in January 2019.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The majority of pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the new deputy headteacher, the early years leader and subject leaders and teachers. The inspector held a discussion with a large representation of the governing body as well as a meeting with the school's chosen school improvement partner.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' books in English, mathematics and foundation subjects in key stages 1 and 2 and learning journals in the early years. A discussion took place with pupils during their lunchtime. The inspector spoke to pupils informally in the classrooms and on the playground.
- A range of documentation was reviewed, including the school's self-evaluation document, the school development plan, and the school's own assessment information, safeguarding procedures and attendance data.
- The inspector took into account the 101 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 71 free-text messages. There were ten responses to the staff questionnaire and 64 responses to the pupils' survey.

Inspection team

Lou Nelson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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