

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Westgate Road, Beckenham, BR3 5DE

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and the senior leadership team are the driving force behind the school's continuing above-average standards and good progress. They have made sure that personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at the heart of the school's work.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been above average for the last three years and progress shows an upward trend.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders and governors have made sure there is no inadequate teaching. This has led to improvements in the teaching of reading and mathematics, and considerable improvement in pupils' writing.
- Children get off to an excellent start because of the outstanding leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage manager.
- Phonics (the sounds that letters make) is taught well in Reception and Key Stage 1 so that children make good progress in reading from an early age.
- Pupils behave well. There have been very few incidents of unacceptable behaviour, such as bullying.
- Pupils are cared for well and as a result they feel exceptionally happy and safe at school. Attendance in almost all classes is consistently high.
- Support staff who work one-to-one or in small groups with vulnerable pupils, including those with disabilities or special educational needs, are making a strong contribution to their successful learning.
- The school encourages parents and carers to help their children at home, and this contributes to pupils' good achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Learning slows when some teachers talk for too long.
- Teachers' marking in pupils' books does not regularly show the next steps pupils need to take to improve their work.
- Teachers do not always encourage pupils to participate actively in their lessons.
- A few pupils eligible for the pupil premium who also have other additional needs are not making good progress in writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons, 11 of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to other lessons, looked at pupils' work and heard them read.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils and governors, including the Vice Chair of the Governing Body, a parent governor, and a representative from the local authority. A letter was received from a parent.
- Inspectors took account of the 92 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as interviews with parents and carers, a letter from a parent and 31 questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documentation, including nationally published data and the school's own data, the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, safeguarding policies and records and documents relating to performance management.

Inspection team

Justina Ilochi, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Huw Evans	Additional Inspector
Juliet Ward	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through pupil premium funding (additional government funding for certain groups, such as pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority) is below the national average but a significant percentage of them are supported at school action plus and joined the school later than the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Over a third of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds, especially Other White and mixed heritage backgrounds, and a few are Black Africans.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported through school action is in line with the national average; the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school works as part of an Umbrella Trust in partnership with seven Catholic primary schools within its local government area.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate the small proportion of teaching that is less than good by making sure that:
 - teachers do not slow the pace of learning by talking for too long
 - marking is consistently effective in informing pupils how to improve their work
 - teachers encourage pupils to participate more and play an active part in lessons.
- Refine the school's processes for making sure that teachers who lead subjects and teams of teachers know and use the full background information on pupils, so that the few pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium and also have other additional needs make good progress, especially in writing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Almost all children join Reception with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. They make good progress in their personal and social development and the development of early reading and mathematical skills. As a result, most pupils start Year 1 with reading skills that are at a higher level than those usually found.
- Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics and has been so over time. The school's internal assessments and work seen in pupils' books show that this trend is set to continue.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed through planned opportunities to discuss and explore their ideas. For example, in a literacy lesson in Year 4, the teacher deftly invited pupils to discuss elements of bias from a newspaper article. Pupils were eager to share their views on the subject, and their developing confidence with public speaking was evident.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Parents and carers work jointly with the school to improve pupils' reading skills. Well-targeted teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 has ensured that pupils' understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is extremely secure and the proportion of pupils in Year 1 achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check is increasing rapidly.
- Pupils' progress in writing is rising, although lagging a little behind that in mathematics and reading. All pupils' writing is benefiting from increased opportunities to write at length in different contexts and subjects within a revised curriculum that focuses more on writing.
- The school's data show almost all pupils in all year groups, including Year 6, are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics compared the dip in Year 6 in 2013. This improving picture directly reflects the better quality of teaching of these subjects resulting from well-directed one-to-one and small-group teaching by knowledgeable and experienced adults.
- The achievement of more-able pupils is good. This is because they are encouraged and appropriately challenged to do the best they can through open-ended questions which require them to work things out for themselves. The proportion of more able pupils on course to reach the highest levels in mathematics is considerable and is improving rapidly in reading and writing.
- There is an improving picture of progress for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, many of whom have made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics this year and are in line to reach similar standards to their peers nationally. This is because the school identified these pupils' needs as soon as they started in Reception more accurately than previously and has provided additional help and guidance in writing and mathematics in all year groups.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium have made good progress in reading and mathematics in the last two years compared with their peers in the school and nationally, and gaps are closing rapidly. However, they had progressed less well in writing and were two or more years behind their peers. This is because a few pupils entitled to free school meals who also have other additional needs are not making good progress in writing.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching throughout the school is good overall, with examples of outstanding practice seen in most year groups, especially Reception and Year 1. A small amount of teaching is still not consistently good because some teachers slow learning when they talk for too long.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and children's personal, physical and independent skills are developing exceptionally well. For example, in a physical education lesson in Reception, children met the high expectations of their teacher by being able to follow music and move as instructed. They were also able to put away all equipment and prepare for their next lesson without adult support.

- The way subjects and topics are taught is exciting and interesting for most pupils. This is because leaders of subjects are well focused on developing teachers' subject knowledge and pupils' ability to use and apply literacy and problem-solving skills in a range of subjects.
- Adults who support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make a strong contribution to raising standards in mathematics, reading and writing because they are briefed well on how to get the best out of the pupils in their charge.
- In lessons, pupils are taught the value of periods of calm reflection and listening, often linked carefully to the extremely effective provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Consequently, pupils' attitudes and relationships with one another and adults are good and a key strength of the school.
- Teachers use a good range of resources, especially information and communication technology, to make sure that teaching is delivered in a variety of ways. Consequently, pupils from diverse ethnic minority backgrounds such as pupils from Other White, mixed heritage and Black African backgrounds are making similarly good progress to their peers.
- The teaching of writing has improved over the year because of the school's actions to raise standards. Imaginative activities, which build on story-telling skills, give pupils a wealth of creative opportunities that improve the quality and length of their written pieces so almost all make good progress.
- For example, in Year 1, teachers systematically set out clear objectives and steps for success so pupils could independently write 'beginning, middle and end' of stories in detail. However, a few pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium who also have other additional needs are not yet making good progress in writing because teachers are not planning activities well enough to match their individual abilities.
- Marking is improving and most pupils are provided with guidance on how to improve their work on a regular basis in writing and mathematics. However, sometimes comments in some books are not sufficiently helpful to enable pupils to know their next steps in learning and how to achieve them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils say they are happy and feel safe at school. They act responsibly in the play areas where they are well supervised.
- The school's religious values underpin the strong spiritual and moral atmosphere of the school. Weekly assemblies are used effectively to encourage and reinforce good behaviour through prayers and spiritual reflection.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently good in most lessons and play a significant part in pupils' good achievement. They are keen to be involved in their own learning by answering questions and sharing their knowledge and understanding with others. However, in some lessons teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to do so.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour well and use a common system which rewards pupils who try hard to produce their best efforts and tackles the occasional 'off task' behaviour shown by a few.
- All parents and carers interviewed as well as those that responded to Parent View agreed that behaviour is good and well managed. Staff also confirmed this view.
- Pupils have good social skills. Most are confident speakers when conversing with adults and other pupils. They get on well together and work constructively in groups. Pupils are respectful of each other and this contributes to their good learning.
- Pupils say they feel safe in the school. They take responsibility for their own and others' safety. They know right from wrong and often correct and help each other. They are fully aware of different forms of bullying, including e-bullying.
- The school uses a good system of rewards to encourage good attendance including publishing attendance on a class-by-class basis to the governing body. Consequently, pupils enjoy school and their attendance is high and has been so over time.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and the senior leadership team are the driving force behind the school's continuing improvement. They have built a strong team of teachers and other staff that has ensured that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics both in Key Stage 1 and 2 is above average and has been so over time.
- Systems for managing the performance of staff are rigorous and appropriately linked to pupils' progress. Teaching is consistently good, as a direct consequence of frequent checking of the quality of teaching to make sure that it is sharply focused on how teachers can improve classroom practice.
- The school engages well with parents and carers and responds to their requests. Parents and carers are invited frequently to religious activities and also to meetings to discuss their children's learning and behaviour. Consequently, there is a strong community feeling in the school and all adults work effectively together to promote equal opportunities and foster good relationships.
- The curriculum is well supported by a good range of lunchtime and after-school clubs which are well attended and add to the enjoyment of pupils. The pupil premium funding is used to fund one-to-one and small-group teaching; to improve social skills; to extend mathematics and writing clubs; and to sponsor school journeys for pupils eligible for the funding.
- The additional funding received by the school for sport is used to increase the range of sporting facilities and engage sport coaches. This is beginning to have an impact on the physical and overall well-being of pupils and there are plans to review its impact as part of the school's future action plan.
- The training of teachers is sharply focused on identified areas for improvement in the school's action plans. Teachers benefit from training and occasions to exchange expertise in aspects such as quality of marking and accuracy of assessments both within the school and externally through the partnership with the eight primary schools within its local area.
- Leaders have developed good systems and procedures for checking that the assessment of pupils is rigorous and accurate. All pupils have been given appropriate and demanding end-of-key-stage targets. However, leaders of subjects and teams of teachers have not used the full background information on pupils to make sure that all pupils are taught well. Consequently, a few pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium who are supported at school action plus and who also joined the school later than the Early Years Foundation Stage are not making good progress.
- The school has had only 'light-touch' support from the local authority because it is recognised as a good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has been effective in challenging senior leaders to bring about improvement. It knows the school's strengths and weaknesses and has been trained well to understand the detailed pupil-progress information provided by the school.
 - Since the previous inspection, the governing body has supported the school to sharpen its self-evaluation and action plans. It knows about the way targets are set for teachers to improve their work.
 - Governors are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and how it links to pupils' progress and the school's pay structure. They know what the school is doing to tackle underperformance.
 - The governing body is aware of what the additional government sport funding and the pupil premium is used for and they are well informed by school leaders about the difference the pupil-premium funding is making to the achievement and well-being of eligible pupils.
 - Governors take safeguarding very seriously and have effective procedures to ensure that pupils are safe. Staff and governors have undertaken appropriate training in child protection and safer recruitment.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	101662
Local authority	Bromley
Inspection number	425612
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	435
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Elizabeth Jones
Headteacher	Mrs Isobel Vassallo
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2008
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