

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Poole

Devon Road, Poole, Dorset BH15 3QQ

## Inspection dates

30–31 January 2019

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders and teachers are working together effectively to raise standards. They responded quickly to the criticisms made in the last inspection and have made significant improvements.
- Pupils now make progress broadly in line with those in other schools from the time they enter the early years right through until they leave for secondary school.
- Leaders and teachers work well to support pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). As a result of the support they receive, particularly in the early years, these pupils make better-than-average progress.
- The trust and the local governing body have significantly increased the level of challenge and support they provide to leaders. Trust officers and governors have put good accountability systems in place and know the school well.
- Children make good progress in the early years as a result of the quality of teaching they receive. They get a good start in learning to read, in a bright and stimulating learning environment.
- Pupils behave well. They are friendly, supportive of each other and do what teachers ask of them. Lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.
- Leaders make sure that pupils' personal development has a high priority across the school. There is a strong ethos of welcome, warmth and respect, underpinned by the school's religious foundation.
- Pupils enjoy a broad curriculum in all year groups. They learn about the world around them and their contribution to it. There are good opportunities to enjoy music and develop their artistic skills. Before- and after-school clubs are well attended and are a prominent part of school life.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastic and committed to improving teaching and learning. However, some are still developing the skills necessary to be completely effective in their role.
- Teachers sometimes do not have high enough expectations of what pupils of average and below-average ability can achieve. This results in some pupils, particularly boys, making less progress than they should.
- Some pupils' standards in writing are not as good as they are in reading and mathematics. This is because teachers' advice is sometimes not precise enough to be helpful.
- The quality of pupils' writing is sometimes undermined by their weak spelling, punctuation and handwriting.

## Full report

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

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that middle leaders have the training to carry out their roles effectively.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
  - have consistently high expectations of pupils of average ability, particularly boys
  - give precise advice to pupils on how to improve their work
  - focus on improving spelling and handwriting.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, supported by her leadership team, has ensured that the school's values and vision are at the centre of the school community's work. Values of respect and tolerance are modelled and celebrated throughout the school. As a result, pupils develop a strong set of positive values as they progress through the school.
- School leaders reacted well to the issues highlighted in the previous inspection report. They quickly set about improving teaching and learning and raising expectations across the whole school. They are quick to admit that there is more to be done. However, significant progress has been made.
- Leaders monitor the life of the school closely. They have an accurate understanding of where teaching is strong and where it needs further development. This has allowed them to support teachers where necessary and so improve the overall quality of teaching. Teachers feel supported by their leaders and are fully committed to continuing to improve the school.
- Leaders have devised and implemented a good range of training for teachers to improve their skills. This has led to significant steps forward in classroom practice and thus improvements in the standards that pupils reach.
- Senior leaders reacted with characteristic tenacity to a fall in standards in reading in 2018. They analysed the cause rapidly and have put in place changes to address the issue they uncovered. Consequently, the standards of pupils currently in key stage 2 are improving again.
- Pupils benefit from a well-organised curriculum that covers an appropriately wide range of subjects. There is a suitable emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics but this is not at the expense of other subjects. Pupils have the opportunity to develop their scientific and investigative skills and to learn about the world around them, past and present. Teachers make good use of these opportunities to reinforce pupils' writing skills. The arts are not neglected. On the week of the inspection, for example, Year 4 were learning to play brass instruments.
- Leaders make sure that the school's assessment systems are used effectively by teachers to monitor progress. A range of regular assessment by teachers, and periodic external tests, are used to give teachers a good understanding of the progress that pupils are making. Leaders are also working with colleagues in other schools in the trust to ensure that their assessment is accurate.
- Middle leaders have an increasing responsibility for ensuring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of the groups in their area of responsibility. These leaders are highly committed to raising standards. However, they are still developing their skills and gaining experience. Currently, they have not succeeded in ironing out inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Leaders use the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. There are detailed plans in place and their effectiveness is monitored. When pupils fall behind

their classmates they are given additional support to allow them to catch up and keep up. Consequently, these pupils are making broadly similar progress to other pupils.

- The leadership of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is ensuring that this group of pupils is supported and able to make good progress from their starting points. Leaders monitor their progress closely and ensure that they receive the help they need. Teaching assistants are effective in providing good day-to-day support. The additional funds available to support pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan are used wisely to give pupils the additional help they need to make progress.

## **Governance of the school**

- The multi-academy trust to which the school belongs has significantly improved the support and challenge it provides to school leaders. Robust structures are in place and trust officers have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The degree of support and challenge has been tailored to the needs of the school.
- The local governing body is active and committed to the success of the school. In the aftermath of the previous inspection, they reorganised themselves and have made sure that the governing body contains a broad range of appropriate skills. Some are highly skilled and experienced. Although some of the changes are relatively recent, governors are proving increasingly effective in challenging leaders to drive up standards. They ask leaders to account for the performance of the school and are persistent in seeking answers.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and teachers ensure that there is a culture of vigilance throughout the school. Teachers and other staff are well trained and understand what to do should they feel a pupil is unsafe. Pupils feel that they are kept safe and that there is someone they can turn to if they have a concern.
- Leaders ensure that vulnerable pupils, and those who are facing additional barriers in their lives, are supported so that they can thrive in school. Staff know their pupils well and work with external agencies to make sure that pupils get the help and protection they need.
- Leaders make sure that the school's record-keeping system is effective and secure. They also ensure that all appropriate checks are made on adults who work with pupils, that these checks are complete, and that risk assessments are carried out whenever necessary.

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

**Good**

- Teachers typically have appropriately high expectations of pupils. They have a good understanding of what pupils know, understand and can do. This helps them to prepare work that builds the next steps in each pupil's learning.

- Teachers work together to plan their work. They also reflect together on the effectiveness of their teaching. This approach is helping to raise the quality of teaching and to increase the consistency of teaching and learning.
- Teachers teach reading well. In early years and key stage 1, pupils are taught phonics effectively and they make rapid progress. Teachers ensure that every pupil gets the help they need so that they can decode and learn words of increasing complexity. The most able are not allowed to coast but are given appropriate work to push them on. Pupils who speak EAL also make strong progress from, in many cases, low starting points.
- Leaders' analysis of reading results showed that in 2018 some pupils were less adept at inferring the meaning of texts. This has now become a focus for teachers and pupils. Pupils regularly practise a variety of reading techniques. They enjoy this work and are beginning to be able to talk confidently about the books they are reading and to discuss the deeper meaning behind authors' words.
- Teachers teach mathematics in a way that makes pupils use their reasoning to think through their work and solve problems. Pupils are used to discussing their ideas and sharing their thinking. This is helping them to understand their mathematics, rather than just remember it.
- Teachers have been working for some time on the way that writing is taught, because results in the past were poor. There has been a significant improvement. However, some inconsistencies remain. In most classes, pupils are set work that improves their vocabulary and understanding of grammar. They are encouraged to write extended passages and learn to structure their writing appropriately. However, pupils, particularly boys, still fail sometimes to make good progress. This is often because the advice they receive from teachers to help them improve their work is not precise enough to be helpful. Consequently, they often repeat the same mistake or fail to take the next step.
- Teachers ensure that they provide challenging and interesting learning activities for pupils across the whole curriculum. Pupils enjoy their regular science lessons, for example. Teachers integrate history and geography well into the curriculum to give pupils additional opportunities to develop their literacy skills. Pupils also respond well to teaching, in their first efforts at learning French.
- Pupils with SEND receive well-structured and effective support to help them make progress. Leaders ensure that teachers know what support each pupil needs and teachers and teaching assistants respond positively.
- Teachers' support for pupils who speak EAL is strong across the age range. When these pupils join the school, often with very little English, they are given significant extra help. As they progress, the nature of the support they receive changes so that it continues to meet their needs.
- Teachers have high expectations of the most able. They are encouraged to reach their potential by thoughtful questioning and appropriately challenging tasks. The best writers have a well-developed vocabulary and are articulate and confident. The most able mathematicians can discuss the conclusions they have reached, and why.
- Teachers are not consistent in their expectations of average-attaining pupils. Many pupils make good progress because teachers set appropriate work for them, but some

do not, particularly with their writing. This has been the case for some time. Teachers' expectations are now generally higher, but some inconsistencies remain.

- Teachers are addressing weaknesses in standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, standards remain lower than average, because not all teachers are consistent in addressing the issue. As a result, some pupils repeat spelling errors or are careless with their punctuation. This undermines the overall standard of their writing.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy the richness of school life. Many take part in the large variety of clubs before and after school. They talk enthusiastically about the opportunities for additional sport and arts at the end of the school day.
- Pupils generally have very positive attitudes to learning. They are happy to come to school and they enjoy their lessons. They are keen to answer questions and to offer their opinion when asked. However, a small number of boys are sometimes less engaged when the quality of teaching does not meet their needs. The standard of presentation and pride in work is good overall, but the work of a minority of pupils does not reach that high standard.
- The school is a warm and respectful place. Pupils treat each other with kindness and thoughtfulness. They are tolerant of each other and model and articulate values that will help them to play a part in modern Britain as they grow up. Relationships with teachers are mutually respectful.
- Teachers and pastoral staff support the needs of those pupils who face additional challenges in their lives well. There is a good range of help available to meet the needs of those with social, emotional or mental health needs. Experienced staff handle sensitive and challenging moments in pupils' lives with skill and compassion.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and as they play at lunchtime. Pupils work and play together and help each other where they can. Behaviour is calm and orderly as pupils move around the school site. Pupils say that disruption in lessons does happen occasionally, but it is dealt with well by their teachers.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with that of pupils in similar schools nationally. Relatively few pupils are absent on a regular basis. Punctuality is good.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Two thirds of pupils achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 in 2018. This is broadly in line with standards in

other schools. A quarter reach the higher standard in all three subjects. This is more than twice the national average. It is indicative of teachers' expectations of the most able.

- Over the last few years, there has been a significant improvement in the proportion who reached the expected standard in writing. In 2016, outcomes were poor but, by 2018, pupils were making similar rates of progress to the national average. This is because of the improvement in the quality of teaching over that period. The quality of writing of pupils in the school now is of a similar standard overall, although the quality of some average-attaining pupils' writing threatens to undermine that.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is in line with those in other schools. Recent improvements in the quality of teaching of mathematics are raising the standard further, albeit slowly.
- In 2018, key stage 2 outcomes in reading were lower than in other schools. This was a setback for the school after a period of improvement. The standard of reading is now improving again because of rapid diagnosis of the issue by leaders and a consequent rise in the quality of teaching.
- Standards in science and history and geography are in line with those of similar schools. However, there are good examples of the most able reaching high standards across a broad range of subjects.
- Key stage 1 pupils achieve similar standards to those in other schools in reading, writing and mathematics. And a similar proportion to other schools achieve a greater depth in these subjects. Pupils make good progress with their phonics in key stage one. The success rate in the Year 1 phonics check is good and virtually all pupils achieve the standard by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils who speak EAL make strong progress throughout their time in the school. Many enter the early years with very little English, but because of the support they receive, they learn to read and write English rapidly. They then continue to develop their skills in the later years of key stage 2 and achieve good outcomes by the time they leave for secondary school.
- The small number of disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with that of other pupils across most subjects. They are well supported, and teachers intervene when necessary to prevent them falling behind.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children make good progress from their starting points and more reach a good standard of development than is average for schools nationally.
- Children enjoy coming into their early years classes and they settle quickly. This is because of the good quality of care and the well-planned and structured routines. The environment is welcoming, bright and stimulating.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is strong. Staff have appropriately high expectations and they quickly assess and understand the needs of individuals. Children spend the day in an appropriate mixture of activities with a number of focused learning groups in which staff emphasise specific learning goals, particularly around

developing early reading and mathematics. Children work well together in groups and also work successfully on their own.

- The quality of early phonics teaching is high. It is supplemented by a clear focus on early reading and the development of a love of books. Children make rapid progress and are well placed to go on developing their understanding of phonics and reading in key stage 1.
- Staff encourage children to talk about their own learning. As a result, children can articulate what they are doing, why they are doing it and how it helps them.
- Leadership of the early years is strong. Structures are well embedded and communication with parents is good. All appropriate safeguarding procedures are in place and understood by staff.
- Pupils who speak EAL are given the additional support they need to begin to learn English and to give them access to the rest of the curriculum. As a result of the skill and care of staff, these pupils make rapid progress.

## School details

Unique reference number	140777
Local authority	Poole
Inspection number	10058315

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy convertor
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	401
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Rt Hon Lord Burnett
Headteacher	Helen Armstrong
Telephone number	01202 676207
Website	<a href="http://www.st-marys.poole.sch.uk">www.st-marys.poole.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@st-marys.poole.sch.uk">office@st-marys.poole.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	11–12 October 2016

## Information about this school

- The school is a larger-than-average primary school.
- It has a larger-than-average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who speak EAL is much higher than the national average. It approaches 50% in the early years.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is well below average.
- The school is sponsored by Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the range of subjects and age groups and scrutinised a wide range of pupils' written work. Many of the observations were conducted jointly with senior or middle leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including minutes of governors' meetings, development plans, an analysis of pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour data, safeguarding documents and the trust and school's review of its own performance.
- The inspectors met with two officers of the trust, the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 85 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and a letter from a parent. They spoke to parents in person. They also took into account the responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Andrew Lovett, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Wigley	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Fox	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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