

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bodmin

Barn Lane, Bodmin, Cornwall PL31 1LW

Inspection dates

10–11 January 2017

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils do not make consistently good and sustained progress in their time at the school. This is partly due to a legacy of weak teaching that has yet to be overcome.
- For too long, pupils have not made good progress in mathematics at key stage 2. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and for girls.
- The differences between the academic performance of boys and girls currently in the school are too wide, particularly in writing.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too inconsistent. Teachers' subject knowledge and classroom management are not consistently strong across all years and subjects.
- Behaviour is not consistently good. A significant minority of pupils do not display the levels of personal development and self-discipline that characterise successful learners.
- Attendance is not improving quickly enough and rates of persistent absence are too high. The low attendance rates of disadvantaged pupils remain a concern.
- Senior leaders, governors and the multi-academy trust have an overgenerous judgement of the quality of education provided by the school. This impairs their ability to improve the school's performance.
- The support provided by the multi-academy trust has not been able to secure good outcomes for pupils at the school.

The school has the following strengths

- School leaders are taking steps to develop the quality of teaching in the school and they are beginning to secure some improvement in this aspect of the school's work.
- School leaders have recently made changes to the delivery of the core curriculum. The impact of these changes is clearest in writing, where pupils at key stage 2 in 2016 made significantly better progress than others nationally.
- The commitment of the headteacher, senior leaders and governors to the school cannot be questioned. They are determined to succeed but the impact of a lot of their initiatives has yet to be fully revealed.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. The Nursery Year provides a calm and orderly start to their education and children go on to achieve well in Reception.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the quality of education provided by the school upon which to base their planning for future improvement
 - systems to track pupils' attainment and progress provide robust and useful information.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that:
 - pupils make much better progress in mathematics at key stage 2, especially disadvantaged pupils and girls
 - the differences between the academic performance of girls and boys diminish
 - teaching is characterised by consistently strong subject knowledge and classroom management.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - low-level disruptive behaviour that interrupts pupils' learning is eradicated
 - pupils consistently develop their understanding of what characterises a successful learner
 - rates of absence and persistent absence decrease quickly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders at all levels, including governors, have not been able to ensure that the quality of education provided at St Mary's is consistently good across all areas.
- Since the school converted to be an academy in April 2014, academic outcomes have remained poor. The actions of leaders and governors and the support from the multi-academy trust have not been sufficient to bring about the rapid improvement required to ensure that pupils make good progress across the curriculum. There have been some improvements recently, notably in writing, but there is still some way to go before outcomes can be regarded as consistently good.
- Senior leaders, governors and the multi-academy trust have an overgenerous view of the quality of education currently being provided by the school and the impact of initiatives they have undertaken to improve it. This impairs their ability to address some of the fundamental issues that the school faces, such as poor behaviour by some pupils.
- Leaders do not have a clear picture of the progress that pupils make as they move through the school. The recently introduced tracking system does not supply sufficiently robust information and leaders are not clear about what some of the information represents in terms of pupils' progress.
- No one can deny that the headteacher, senior leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that St Mary's is an improving school. Their passion for the job is evident in everything they do. Nonetheless, many initiatives have only recently been implemented and it is not possible to say whether their impact will be successful or sustained.
- The curriculum has undergone some significant changes recently, especially with regard to the teaching of literacy and mathematics. New approaches are being taken and this is beginning to have some impact on the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make, especially in reading and writing. Changes to the mathematics curriculum are more recent and their impact is detectable in some year groups. Nonetheless, improvements are not as evident as they are in literacy.
- Leadership of teaching is improving. Performance management is being used to identify areas of underperformance. Professional development for teachers is improving, drawing on both internal and external support. Teaching assistants are now fully involved in training, for example in the recent changes to both the literacy and mathematics curriculum. Leaders aim to set high expectations for both staff and pupils but are aware, however, that it will take time to embed the new systems and structures.
- Leaders and governors are aware of the need to analyse the use of additional funding and its impact on pupils. In particular, analysis of the use of the pupil premium has improved and been supported by external advisers. Despite this, however, the progress of disadvantaged pupils in some areas, notably key stage 2 mathematics, is not improving quickly enough.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities and they engage well with the experiences offered. Trips, such as visits to the holy buildings of other faiths or to

London, are also used relatively effectively to promote fundamental British values such as tolerance and respect for others of different backgrounds and faiths. Nevertheless, some pupils' understanding of Britain as a multi-faith, multi-ethnic country is still a little underdeveloped. Elections to the school council are reinforced by links with local councillors in order to develop pupils' understanding of democracy and the rule of law. Aspects of the history curriculum also support this.

- Funding to support pupils' physical development and their participation in competitive sports is used well. Specialist sport providers are improving pupils' health and their enjoyment of being active through a wide range of sporting activities such as orienteering.
- Leadership of the early years is strong and as a consequence there have been marked improvements in the attainment of children. This means that younger pupils currently in the school have a more secure foundation for future progress than some older pupils who still labour under a legacy of weaker teaching in the past.
- Leadership of special educational needs is developing and the funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is being used increasingly well to support their learning needs. A new system of provision mapping was introduced in January 2017 with the intention of heightening the level of monitoring. This system is very much in its infancy, however, and has not had any time to show an impact as yet.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is rooted in its Catholic ethos. The school's motto, 'Educate, Protect, Love, Serve', is a central reference point in the daily lives of the staff and pupils. It was drawn up with input from pupils, who clearly understand what it means and the values it promotes. Assemblies, class liturgies and lessons are used effectively to promote these values.

Governance of the school

- Governors at the school are deeply committed to creating a successful school, but their understanding of the quality of education provided by the school is over-optimistic. While recognising that 2016's academic outcomes were 'not good enough', they attribute too much impact to the work done to improve the progress of pupils since then.
- Governors understand the importance of focusing on outcomes for key groups such as disadvantaged pupils and are now giving them greater prominence in governors' meetings. Given that this is a very recent change, however, it is not possible to say what impact this will have on disadvantaged pupils' progress.
- Governors have a good understanding of their part in creating a culture of safeguarding in the school. They understand the changes brought in by the latest safeguarding guidance issued by the Department for Education.
- The school is a member of a multi-academy trust and the work of the local governing body is overseen by the trust's board of directors. The challenge and support provided by this body has not been sufficient to improve the quality of leadership, teaching and outcomes for pupils quickly enough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher, the designated safeguarding lead, the parent support advisor and all

other staff work very well together to keep children safe. They are meticulous in their approach and have created a culture of vigilance which ensures that all who work at the school understand that safeguarding is their own individual responsibility. The concept of early help is well understood and put into practice consistently.

- The systems in place to protect children are thorough and robust. Staff make appropriate referrals to outside agencies and are persistent in pursuing the best interests of the child if they are not satisfied with the response they get.
- All staff are trained to the appropriate level, including recent training on the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. The single central record of checks on the backgrounds of teachers and other staff is well maintained. Cross-referencing with staff files show that record keeping is also strong.
- The recent addition of the word 'protect' to the school motto is fully justified by the effective work that school staff do with regard to child protection and safeguarding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- A history of poor teaching has meant that there is a legacy of underachievement in some year groups in the school. In addition, some groups have experienced frequent changes of teacher and this, too, has had an adverse effect on pupils' progress. The impact of these shortcomings in teaching was seen in the results of the national curriculum assessments in 2016, especially in key stage 2 mathematics. Moreover, current groups of pupils, most notably Years 4 and 6, have some way to go before they make up for the impact of ineffective teaching in the past.
- Notwithstanding this legacy, the quality of teaching in the school is still too inconsistent. Teachers' subject knowledge and ability to manage pupils in the classroom varies too much across subjects and age groups.
- In particular, less-effective teaching is characterised by an inability at times to ensure that pupils are focused enough on the task in hand, despite the use of the school's classroom management protocols. This reduces the time available for learning and slows progress.
- The level of challenge provided by teaching is variable and it is not clear that the work pupils are set is pitched at the right level. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils, who often spend a lot of time doing mathematics work that is within their capability rather than work which extends, enriches or develops their fluency and mastery of key concepts. This slows down their progress and the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- The teaching of phonics is well established in the early years and is having a particularly strong impact on pupils' ability to read. However, inspectors noted that the degree of consistency in phonics teaching seen in the early years was sometimes not present higher up the school.
- The school has just introduced a new system to track pupils' progress over time. School leaders admit that this system is in its infancy. It was not clear to inspectors that the information it contained was robust enough to provide the basis for accurately identifying where teaching is either more or less effective. Its use as a tool for school improvement at the moment is therefore limited.

- Teaching in the early years is highly effective in both the Nursery and Reception. Teachers and teaching assistants make good use of a wide variety of resources, both indoors and out, to provide stimulating activities for children that allow them to flourish.
- Responses to the staff survey show that they value the opportunities provided by the school to develop their teaching practice.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- A significant minority of pupils have not developed an understanding of how to be successful learners. In discussions with inspectors, some pupils revealed a lack of age-appropriate maturity and did not seem to understand the implications of their actions for their education or a willingness to improve their approach to learning.
- Some pupils were observed, in both lessons and discussions in groups with inspectors, talking over other pupils and not listening respectfully to each other. Nonetheless, many pupils are responding well to the new reward system, which is encouraging them to develop more positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils understand the school's systems to tackle and reduce bullying, although some expressed concerns about the consistency of their use.
- The school uses its religious ethos to promote pupils' personal development, especially with regard to spiritual and moral issues. Pupils learn, for example, about forgiveness and the power of giving and could discuss these concepts well.
- Pupils are safe in the school and understand and appreciate the work of all staff to keep them safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- There is too much low-level disruption in classrooms. Too often, pupils lose focus, do not follow instructions and chatter to each other while the teacher is talking. This interrupts learning and slows progress. In discussions across a range of year groups, pupils complained that they find it hard to concentrate at times because of the behaviour of their classmates.
- School leaders have recently introduced a new behaviour system which has dramatically reduced the number of serious behavioural incidents in the last two months. However, leaders' assessment of the quality of behaviour in classrooms in key stages 1 and 2 is too optimistic and they have not ensured that it is consistently good.
- Behaviour in the early years is good and this contributes to the calm and orderly learning environment that has been created there.
- In 2015/16, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who receive support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities was too low. This situation has not improved and, indeed, overall absence for all pupils so far this year has risen slightly.

Persistent absence has also risen. Low attendance remains a barrier to achievement for key groups such as the disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- For too long, pupils at St Mary's have been underachieving, especially at key stage 2. There have been some improvements recently, but the legacy of weaker teaching over time means that there is still work to be done before academic outcomes are consistently good. Some pupils, most notably in Year 6, have quite a bit of ground still to make up.
- Observations in lessons and scrutiny of work show that pupils currently in the school make inconsistent progress across year groups and subjects. Recent changes to the curriculum in literacy are beginning to have an impact on the quality of work produced by pupils and the progress that they make. In mathematics, however, improvement in progress is less clear.
- The national curriculum assessments in 2016 also showed this pattern of inconsistency across subjects and key stages. At key stage 2, pupils made significantly slower progress than other pupils nationally in mathematics but significantly better progress in writing. Progress in reading was broadly in line with the national average. That the same cohort of pupils can make widely varying progress in different subjects is a key element in the fact that outcomes require improvement.
- At key stage 1, outcomes in 2016 were more consistent. Pupils attained at broadly national levels in reading and writing, although attainment was lower in mathematics. Of particular concern is the fact that only one of the 10 lower-ability pupils went on to reach the expected standard in mathematics at the end of Year 2. Scrutiny of work in Year 3 shows that pupils are still not making enough progress in mathematics.
- More positively, performance in the phonics screening check in Year 1 has risen consistently over recent years and is now in line with the national figure, although the results for disadvantaged pupils are well below those of other pupils nationally. Inspectors listened to pupils of all abilities reading in lessons. They displayed the skills necessary to read with fluency and showed the ability to use their phonics skills to help them with unfamiliar or difficult words.
- Academic outcomes in the early years have improved recently, with a sharp rise in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the early years foundation stage profile at the end of 2016. Children currently in the early years demonstrate that they are also making good progress from their individual starting points.
- Overall, the school's use of the pupil premium is not yet securing consistently good achievement for disadvantaged pupils. Their outcomes replicate the pattern of inconsistent progress shown by all pupils. At key stage 2 in 2016, disadvantaged pupils' progress in mathematics was particularly poor. Evidence seen in books or in the school's own assessments indicates that disadvantaged pupils are not making significantly faster progress so far this year. At key stage 1, disadvantaged pupils also underperformed in mathematics, albeit a small cohort. By contrast, all the small cohort

of disadvantaged pupils in Reception achieved a good level of development.

- Outcomes for boys and girls vary widely. Girls currently in the school who took the national curriculum assessments at key stage 1 in 2016 consistently outperformed boys in each of reading, writing and mathematics, with no boys achieving greater depth in reading or writing. Conversely, girls' progress in mathematics at key stage 2 was significantly below that of other girls nationally (and in the bottom 10%), while boys progressed in line with boys nationally. Even in the early years, where outcomes are good, the difference between boys' attainment and girls' higher attainment is much wider than the national figure.
- The most able pupils at key stage 2 made progress that was broadly in line with similar pupils nationally. This also true for attainment at key stage 1, although cohorts here are very small. The school identifies and tracks their most able pupils' progress on an individual basis but as cohorts are so small it is difficult to generalise about their performance. Observations in lessons and work scrutiny do indicate, however, that in some cases these pupils are not making sufficient progress as the level of challenge they are presented with is too low.
- Work scrutiny of a sample of current pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities shows that they are making broadly similar progress to other pupils in the school with the same starting points.

Early years provision

Good

- Children get off to a good start in the early years at St Mary's. Both Nursery and Reception provide calm, orderly yet stimulating environments for children to begin their education. By the time children leave Reception they are very well prepared to start Year 1.
- The early years is led well and standards are improving. Liaison between the Nursery and Reception is also managed well and this ensures a consistency of approach to teaching that is promoting improvements in children's learning.
- The classrooms in early years are awash with resources that help children to make good progress. Children's work is displayed in order to celebrate success. Good use is made of the outdoor area to provide additional learning opportunities.
- Teaching is typically good in the early years. For example, phonics is taught in a consistent way by teachers and teaching assistants, which promotes the secure development of children's reading. All staff display high expectations for what children can achieve. They have good subject knowledge and activities are well planned to promote learning. Staff also give effective feedback to children on how to make their work even better.
- Boys' writing was a concern in the past. This has been successfully addressed by amending the curriculum to provide increased opportunities for writing. Indeed, the curriculum as a whole is strongly focused on promoting literacy and numeracy. The success of this approach can be seen in the improving outcomes for children at the end of Reception.
- Outcomes in the early years are strong. In 2016, four out of every five children at the end of Reception attained a good level of development in their early learning goals.

This was a dramatic improvement on previous years and is considerably higher than the national figure. Particularly good levels of attainment, for example, were seen in the early learning goals of reading, writing, number and shape, space and measure, in which virtually all children attained the early learning goals. The work of children currently in the school shows that they are continuing to make good progress.

- Additional funding is used well to improve the progress of children who are eligible for it. In 2016, for example, all the disadvantaged children in Reception had achieved a good level of development by the end of the year. Staff in the early years are very clear about the particular needs of key groups and this helps them to promote their learning effectively.
- Assessment is accurate. Thorough moderation procedures ensure that teachers' evaluation of children's levels of development are robust.
- Children demonstrate good communication skills. They can make themselves understood clearly when talking to each other or to adults. They can explain their learning well.
- Personal development is well promoted and children are quickly acquiring the habits of successful learners. They show commitment to listening and learning from teachers. In their phonics work, for example, they are keen to sound out words correctly. Examples of their work over time show that children persevere in working towards confident letter formation.
- Children behave very well. They respond to adults' requests and interact thoughtfully with each other, helping out where appropriate.
- Safeguarding in the early years shows all the effective practice that characterises the work to keep children safe in the school as a whole. There are no breaches of the statutory welfare requirements.

School details

Unique reference number	140773
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10024948

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Andrew Brumby
Headteacher	Alana McGovern
Telephone number	01208 73218
Website	www.st-marys-bod.eschools.co.uk
Email address	head@st-marys-bod.cornwall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about contact details, examination and assessment results, the curriculum, accessibility plan, equality objectives, annual reports and accounts, governors' information and duties and charging and remissions policies.
- St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bodmin became an academy in April 2014 when it joined the Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust. The work of the trust is overseen by a board of directors. The trust is responsible for: one nursery; one first school; 32 primary schools and two secondary schools across seven local authorities in the south west region.
- The school meets the current government floor standards.

- The school is of average size for a primary school. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is similar to the national average. A smaller proportion than average of its pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons and scrutinised work across a range of year groups and subjects. Some observations in lessons were undertaken jointly with the headteacher or other senior leaders.
- Inspectors had discussions with the headteacher, the interim chief executive officer of the trust, senior leaders and other members of staff. The lead inspector met with members of the local governing board.
- Inspectors had discussions with pupils, both formally in groups and informally during lessons and at other times. In addition, pupils with a range of abilities were listened to reading aloud.
- A range of documentary evidence was examined. This included the school's own self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, minutes of governors' meetings, records of assessments of pupils' work and information about their progress. Documents relating to safeguarding and child protection were also examined, as was the single central record of the checks the school makes on the background of teachers and other staff and their suitability to work with children.
- In making their judgements, inspectors took into account 51 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire. The lead inspector also talked to some parents at the beginning of the school day. There were seven responses to the online staff questionnaire and no responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Stephen Lee, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Aisha Waziri	Ofsted Inspector
Abi Staff	Ofsted Inspector
Anthony Epps	Ofsted Inspector

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