

St Mary's Church of England Junior School

Swan Lane, Long Stratton, Norwich, Norfolk NR15 2UY

Inspection dates

12–13 October 2016

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The leaders of the school have a clear vision for school improvement. All their energy and enthusiasm is focused on making sure pupils do their best. As a result, pupils' outcomes have improved in reading, writing and mathematics since the last inspection and are continuing to improve.
- Teachers are committed to improving their teaching and pupils' learning. The good-quality work in the pupils' books in all subjects shows the impact of good teaching and assessment across the school.
- Governors are effective and say that the review of governance that followed the last inspection 'was a real wake-up call'. They scrutinise the work of the school and this has an impact on improving pupils' outcomes.
- Most parents only have positive things to say about the school. For example, one parent said, 'I'm delighted with the progress my child has made here, there is a team of dedicated staff who genuinely want the very best for the children.'
- Pupils also share the school's vision. For example, one said, 'I love learning! I feel safe and the lessons are fun and exciting.'
- Pupils are safe in school. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
- The curriculum is interesting and exciting and takes account of pupils' interests. Pupils like the wide range of after-school clubs and activities.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is a strength because pupils have the opportunity to explain their ideas and thoughts.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons, and generally around the school and on the playground; however, there is a minority of pupils who display low-level disruptive behaviour when the lessons do not engage their interest.
- The impact of middle leaders on progress, especially in mathematics, needs further improvement because the pupils do not make as much progress as they do in reading and writing.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the effectiveness and impact of all middle leaders in improving teaching and learning, by:
 - having a sharper focus on the progress that pupils are making over time
 - ensuring that senior leaders and governors hold middle leaders to account more rigorously for the outcomes of pupils.
- Further improve teaching and learning, by:
 - ensuring that teachers' feedback consistently helps pupils to improve their work
 - further extending the use of problem-solving and reasoning in mathematics in other subjects across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- This is a school that focuses on its values of 'Inspire, Challenge and Engage'. Pupils, parents and governors talk with enthusiasm about each of these values and they are visible in how the school community works throughout the school day.
- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well because they keep a check on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They have relentlessly driven improvement since the last inspection. The focus has rightly been on improving teaching, learning and assessment. Consequently, all the recommendations from the last inspection have been addressed; pupils' outcomes have improved and are continuing to improve; however, further development is needed in teacher feedback so that it consistently helps pupils to improve their work.
- Not all middle leaders have a clear understanding of what the pupils need to do to improve or how to help the teachers become more effective in their teaching. This results in a very general plan for improvement for some subjects and limits impact.
- Effective use is made of the opportunities that teaching staff are given for professional development and sharing practice within the local cluster of schools. Extensive training for all teaching staff has resulted in improvements in the overall quality of teaching and especially in the teaching of writing and mathematics.
- There are effective systems in place to evaluate the quality of teaching both through performance management and a range of evaluation approaches that the school uses.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to improve the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. The additional government funding is used well to provide good-quality support for those individuals who are entitled to it.
- The staff take great care to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities can benefit fully from the curriculum. For example, additional reading resources and adult support are provided, which enables pupils to catch up with their reading.
- The curriculum is rich and varied. As well as termly topics there are trips and residential activities for each year group. For example, during a recent enterprise week, pupils planned an enterprise project that would make a profit. This enabled pupils to apply their mathematical skills in calculating how to make a profit and their English skills in persuading fellow pupils and parents to spend their money.
- Pupils have a good understanding of British values and have had the opportunity to explore them through whole-school projects such as 'nine decades of song' and a whole-community event led by the pupils celebrating the Queen's birthday.
- There is a wide range of after-school clubs that broaden the pupils' learning opportunities. The primary physical education and sports funding (additional government funding) is used to develop teachers' skills, knowledge and understanding in teaching a variety of different sports. Pupils benefit from inter-school competitions and the number of pupils participating has doubled from last year.

- A small minority of parents expressed concerns about the school through text messages and Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, about leadership, bullying, poor behaviour, insufficient challenge for the most able pupils and homework. During the inspection, these matters were rigorously reviewed and inspectors found no grounds for these concerns.
- The local authority has played an effective role in the improvement of this school through its brokerage of effective training, the personal and skilled support of advisers and external validation of improvements. This has led to improvements in the quality and consistency of teaching across the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors, all of whom are also trustees, are ambitious for the school. They are led by the very able chair of governors, who has a good understanding of the roles and responsibilities of governors in driving and shaping school improvement. An audit of skills has enabled the governing body to identify and address the areas of expertise needed to further improve the impact of governors on developing the school into the future.
- Governors set challenging targets for the headteacher. They are aware of the link between teachers' performance and their pay and draw on a range of information to reward good teaching.
- Governors monitor pupils' outcomes closely by visiting school on a regular basis. In addition, they visit the school for one whole day each term – known as 'deep dive day'. This results in governors offering both challenge and support to senior leaders when it is appropriate to do so. Governors understand their responsibilities in managing and overseeing the school's finances, the use of additional government funding, and the challenges that come with acting as trustees for a stand-alone academy. They discharge these responsibilities well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. A rich vein of care runs through the school, with pupils watching out for each other and staff showing vigilance towards every pupil. Leaders ensure that all statutory requirements are met with regard to recruitment and checks to ensure that every member of staff is suitable to work with children. Staff and governors receive appropriate child protection and safeguarding training on a regular basis.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe in a variety of situations and, by Year 6, they have a very good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet and the potential risks of using social media. Pupils say that incidents of bullying are rare and they report that they feel safe. They feel they can talk to any teacher, safe in the knowledge that they will always help them.
- School staff are alert to the signs associated with pupils at risk of harm and leaders tenaciously pursue support from other professionals for any child or their family, should the need arise. Leaders and governors know the importance of being prepared for any safeguarding eventuality, including extreme views, child sexual exploitation and domestic abuse.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and teaching assistants across the school often extend pupils' learning through the use of well thought through questions. Pupils are given time to reflect and think before giving an answer.
- Teachers' feedback on pupils' work encourages pupils to reflect on how they could improve further, with opportunities provided to follow up on teachers' developmental comments. This is a strong feature in most classes; however, it is not consistent in all classes and so some pupils are not sure how to improve their work and their progress slows slightly as a result.
- All pupils receive a good level of challenge, including the most able and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, in a mathematics lesson for the most able, the pupils were asked to investigate calculating different amounts of money using only a given number of coins. This resulted in the pupils devising a recording method that could help explain their thinking and answers. This apparently 'easy' task demanded high levels of thinking, discussion and calculation.
- Pupils are encouraged to discuss and explore their learning with each other. As a result, they learn to express their ideas clearly to another person and to solve problems together.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well in lessons by good teaching and in some cases by specially trained teaching assistants. Consequently, the work in their books indicates that they make good progress from the start of the year.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed to support pupils' learning needs. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to assess pupils' learning during lessons, and are quick to identify any additional learning needs. As a result, pupils make good progress in lessons. Teaching assistants are effective in the delivery of a range of additional support to pupils on an individual or small-group basis, often supporting the least able pupils.
- Teachers encourage pupils to use a variety of strategies to solve mathematical problems in most classes. Often, teachers link pupils' mathematical learning to work in other areas of the curriculum. However, this is not a consistent feature in all classes and so some pupils have few opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts and circumstances. This prevents their general good progress and attainment in mathematics from being even better.
- Leaders and teachers place a high priority on the development of reading skills, with parents and pupils knowing that there is an expectation that pupils will read regularly at home. Pupils are keen to read and apply this across the curriculum.
- In some lessons, the work set by the teacher does not match the pupils' needs which results in lapses in pupils' attention and in behaviour not being good enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The curriculum effectively promotes not only pupils' understanding of their roles as future citizens but also that of other cultures, with an emphasis on knowledge, tolerance and understanding.
- From their entry into Year 3, pupils are taught to respect each other and their school environment. This is evident in the care that pupils take in the presentation of their work and the condition of the school building. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils are able to express opinions and ideas that go beyond their learning of facts. Often this includes the capacity to empathise with others from different backgrounds, countries, cultures or religious beliefs. As a result, pupils are well equipped for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders, teachers and teaching assistants take every opportunity to show their high aspirations for each pupil in a practical manner. They encourage pupils to be optimistic about the choices they make and to be open-minded to new ideas. This equips pupils to enjoy their successes and to show resilience when things don't go so well. As a result, pupils relish the challenges set for them in lessons and take pride in their workbooks, which are mainly set out neatly and carefully.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Attendance is above the national average, with pupils arriving punctually and ready for the day ahead. They take pride in their appearance and display strong attitudes to their learning, which waiver only when learning is occasionally not well matched to their abilities.
- Pupils are courteous to each other and to staff and visitors. They are inquisitive, polite and confident, with an eagerness to involve others in their learning. They enjoy roles of responsibility, for example as learning ambassadors and school councillors who represent the pupils during weekly meetings.
- Behaviour is not consistently good at all times of the school day. There is some minor low-level disruption in classrooms when learning does not fully engage the pupils. A small minority of pupils move around the school in a way that is distracting to other pupils while they are working in classrooms.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over time, the majority of pupils make progress that is at least good. As a result, most pupils attain well, leaving school well equipped for the next stage of their education. Leaders monitor specific groups of pupils, particularly where they may be at risk of underperformance, for example pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders follow the performance of each of these pupils closely, including through termly meetings with teachers to ensure that any dip

in a pupil's progress is quickly addressed. However, leaders and teachers have been less sharp in addressing the progress of pupils in mathematics, which has been lower than that in reading and writing.

- By the end of key stage 2, in 2016, the proportion of pupils attaining at expected or above expected levels exceeded the national average in reading and writing. In mathematics, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected level was below the national average. However, more pupils than nationally did in fact reach the higher level in mathematics.
- The current pupil information about progress and attainment shows that from their starting points, most children make good or better progress and achieve well.
- Disadvantaged pupils in each year group make at least good progress over time and so they attain at least as well as pupils who are not disadvantaged by the end of key stage 2. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and attain well in relation to their starting points.
- The most able disadvantaged pupils make good progress. They read widely and are fluent, confident readers who can talk about the plot and characters in the book they are reading because they read often in school and are supported by their parents. Year 6 have a good understanding of how authors use different means to develop their characters.
- Most lower ability readers continue to learn successfully through the continued teaching of phonics, which is improving their blending and recognition of words. As a result, pupils improve their reading performance and are enthusiastic about reading.
- There is clear evidence in pupils' workbooks for 2016 of good progress being made by the most able pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers are now better at pitching work at a higher level in all subjects and have much higher expectations of what the most able pupils could and should achieve.
- The school's approach to the curriculum enables teachers and leaders to judge pupils' progress and attainment in a range of subjects beyond English and mathematics. As a result of this and the high aspirations of teachers, pupils achieve well across the full range of subjects.

School details

Unique reference number	137311
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10019619

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Perry-Yates
Principal	Alison Cullum
Telephone number	01508 530459
Website	www.stmarysjunior.co.uk
Email address	office@st-marys.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 November 2014

Information about this school

- The school is an average sized junior school. Each age group is taught in two classes.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- There is an average proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support funded through the pupil premium.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- In 2016, the school met the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups. They also listened to pupils reading.
- The inspectors scrutinised work in books and discussed pupils' work with them during lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, subject leaders and representatives of the governing body (who are also trustees of the academy) as well as with the local authority adviser.
- Inspectors spoke to parents informally at the start of the school day. They took account of the 86 Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and free text responses.
- The inspectors considered the two staff questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including: the school's own self-evaluation of current performance and plans for improvement; the school's most recent information on the achievement and progress of pupils; information relating to the safeguarding of pupils; and the school's most recent information relating to the attendance of pupils.

Inspection team

Simon Harbrow, lead inspector

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