

St Mary's C of E (C) First School

Marston Road, Wheaton Aston, Stafford, Staffordshire ST19 9PQ

Inspection dates

2 to 3 July 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 their appointment, senior leaders have led a rapid improvement of the school. The areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been addressed. The quality of teaching and outcomes for the pupils are now good.
- Through the federation, leaders have a shared ambition that all pupils receive a high-quality education. Support from a multi-academy trust and other local schools has assisted the school in building capacity for improvement.
- Governors are effective. They carry out their roles professionally and always act in the best interest of the pupils. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well.
- Teachers set work that builds effectively on the differing abilities of pupils in the class. Tasks are appropriately challenging.
- The school has the overwhelming confidence of parents and carers. Relationships are very strong. Staff look after pupils very well. Safeguarding is effective.
- Although phonics is generally taught well, this year there has been a decline in the results of the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- Pupils behave well. They enjoy school and develop positive attitudes to learning.
- The early years is led well. The children make strong progress because the teachers provide stimulating and challenging activities to meet their needs.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is covered well and that it provides pupils with experiences in the context for learning.
- Current pupils make strong progress in writing. However, while the teaching of writing is good, pupils do not always apply their writing skills consistently across a range of subjects.
- New approaches to the teaching of reading are embedding well. As a result, reading is taught well and pupils are enthusiastic about reading. However, pupils do not yet have enough opportunities to develop their comprehension skills further.
- Middle leaders are new to their role. They now play a key role in leading developments across the curriculum, but they are not sufficiently involved in improving the quality of teaching and learning in their subject.
- Leaders focus on the right areas for improvement. However, they are not sharp enough, in their action plans, in setting targets that are specific, time-related and measurable. Plans do not indicate who is monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and outcomes by:
 - ensuring that teachers support pupils in applying and improving their phonics knowledge when reading and writing
 - checking that pupils' writing skills are consistently applied when they write in a range of subjects
 - further developing pupils' reading skills in making predictions, summarising and comparing texts to increase their depth of understanding.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - strengthening the impact and accountability of middle leaders who are new to their role to further improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress
 - refining school improvement action plans by setting targets that are specific, time-related and measurable and by monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions more precisely.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher and two heads of school provide strong leadership. Since the previous inspection, they have ensured that the quality of teaching and learning has improved rapidly. Consequently, pupils of all abilities, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress as they move through the school.
- The school receives good support from the local middle school with which it is federated. The school also receives support from the diocese, the multi-academy trust, the local authority and other local schools. These links are of great benefit to the school through developing and sharing teaching and leadership expertise.
- Leaders and governors successfully communicate their vision and ambition to pupils, staff and parents. There are high expectations, clearly expressed values and a strong Christian ethos in the school.
- Leaders secure and sustain improvements to teaching, learning and assessment through regular professional development to address areas for improvement. Staff value the training that they have received and the support provided by leaders to improve their planning. Staff also value the feedback that they receive from leaders to improve their practice.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and leaders know the school well and focus on the right areas for improvement. However, school improvement planning is not sharp enough. Plans do not set measurable targets with timescales. Plans do not indicate who is monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions taken.
- Middle leaders have recently been appointed. They are starting to play a key role in leading developments across the curriculum. However, they are not yet having an impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their subject.
- Leaders ensure that funding for pupils who are disadvantaged is used well to meet pupils' specific needs. There is evidence that well-targeted actions, such as the pastoral support, are leading to good outcomes, both academically and in their personal development. Well-planned interventions are regularly evaluated to ensure that they continue to have a positive impact.
- The curriculum has been designed to ensure that there is a good balance between knowledge and skills, with opportunities for links across subjects and year groups. Enrichment and the use of outdoors features heavily, all of which serves to promote a love of learning, skills for life and high aspirations. All pupils are able to flourish and 'Shine as a light in the world', which is the school motto. Pupils enjoy studying topics, such as the Stone Age and volcanoes. The curriculum is enriched with extra-curricular activities, such as dance, sport and outdoor skills.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. There are plenty of enrichment activities and special events, such as visits to a local care home to sing for the residents. Pupils also learn about various religions, and they visit places of worship, such as Lichfield Cathedral, to experience a live musical production of 'The Snowman'. Teachers have established links with schools outside their local area, which enables pupils to appreciate a variety of cultures. Strong links with the

local community are part of the practice in school.

- Pupils have good opportunities to learn about British values, and they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils constantly show values, such as tolerance and respect, in their everyday interactions with each other and with adults.
- Leaders know pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) very well and monitor their progress in detail. They ensure that funding received for these pupils is used effectively through targeted intervention groups and specialised resources. As a result, provision for these pupils is good.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sports premium funding is also used effectively. It has increased pupils' participation in sport. It is used to employ a sports coach and provide a range of activities that pupils enjoy. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in competitions, such as dance and football. The school has recently gained the Gold School Games Award Mark. The coach works alongside teachers to help them improve their skills in teaching PE.
- Parents are very positive about school life and most would recommend it to others. Typical comments from parents included, 'St Mary's is an excellent school. I cannot rate the school more highly.'

Governance of the school

- Governors are well informed about the life of the school. They ask challenging questions to bring about further improvements. Governors have a secure understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. This is as a result of regular reports of assessment information and reports from leaders.
- Governors recognise the improvements the school has made since the previous inspection. They say that the quality of teaching has greatly improved.
- The governors monitor the spending of the school's finances, including how the pupil premium, special educational needs and PE and sports funding are spent. Governors are particularly rigorous in keeping up to date with the progress of pupils who come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding practices are well established and are effective. Senior leaders and governors have ensured that there is a culture and ethos of keeping children safe from harm.
- Regular training, undertaken by staff and governors, includes all aspects of safeguarding, including how to prevent pupils from being at risk from radicalisation and extremism. This training equips staff with the knowledge and skills that they need to detect pupils who are potentially vulnerable and what to do if they have a concern. All staff receive appropriate and regular updates about child protection.
- Staff are vigilant in looking for and tackling any potential safeguarding issues. They keep a watchful eye on potentially vulnerable pupils and work closely with the school's

safeguarding team if they have concerns.

- Leaders report safeguarding concerns to the appropriate authority, where relevant. They also ensure that in-school support is tailored well where relevant. Staff work well with agencies to safeguard pupils. Record-keeping is detailed and thorough. Children missing in education procedures are followed up well. Safety is taught throughout the curriculum.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers are held accountable for the progress of every pupil in their class at regular progress meetings with leaders. The impact of class teaching and interventions for pupils who are at risk of falling behind is checked rigorously.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, owing to the training they receive. This helps them to explain clearly what pupils must learn, and enables them to teach concepts securely so that pupils progress well. Teachers demonstrate what pupils need to do effectively and ensure that they all understand their work so that lesson objectives are met.
- Teachers intervene at timely intervals to check on pupils' learning. They suitably address any misconceptions that individuals might have, and they give the necessary guidance about what must be improved, thereby enabling pupils to make faster progress.
- The teaching of phonics ensures that pupils can build words effectively and it supports them with spellings. There has, however, been a dip in the proportions of pupils attaining the phonics screening check this year. The dip is partly due to a number of pupils with speech and language difficulties and those with SEND in Year 1. However, overall, pupils do not have enough reminders to apply their phonics skills across the curriculum so that they might embed their phonics skills.
- Pupils took pride in demonstrating their reading skills to the inspector. Pupils read widely and often. The introduction of strategies has ensured pupils have a love of reading and are developing their higher order reading skills. However, leaders recognise that some pupils do not yet have the opportunity to further develop a much deeper understanding of the text.
- A number of strategies have been introduced to enable all pupils to produce a higher standard of written work. Pupils demonstrate their ability to write well for a range of purposes and different audiences. During the inspection, pupils in key stage 2 were writing a diary in the style of a character from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Pupils in Year 2 were writing a recount of a visit to the local meadow. Work in the pupils' books is presented well and pupils have a good handwriting style. However, pupils do not always apply their writing skills consistently across the curriculum.
- Well-planned use of practical resources, especially in mathematics, ensures that pupils grasp concepts quickly and are able to solve real-life problems. Teachers support pupils' mathematical understanding well. They ensure that pupils access the full breadth of the curriculum, with a clear focus on pupils establishing a solid and secure understanding of number as a prerequisite to future learning. Teachers provide high-

quality opportunities for pupils to develop their fluency, reasoning and problem-solving knowledge.

- Teachers have developed very positive relationships with pupils and expect them to work hard in lessons. All adults know what part they play in lessons and offer a good level of support to all abilities. Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to work together and this further develops their personal and social skills and opportunities to share ideas.
- Homework is based on the skills, knowledge and understanding the pupils are currently learning. It provides an opportunity for the pupils to enhance their learning and to challenge them further. Homework projects, such as making a model of a castle and weapons used in the Stone Age period, facilitate parents and pupils working together on joint projects at home. Pupils say that homework is beneficial in helping them improve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are confident and have a positive self-esteem. Pupils know how to be a successful learner and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and have good manners. They are respectful to others and adults. They ensure that visitors are made to feel welcome. They display a strong sense of pride in their learning, the school and the wider community.
- As a result of the good pastoral guidance and support offered, their personal skills are developing well. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure. They are taught how to keep themselves safe, for example when online. Parents who met the inspector spoke very positively about how well their child is looked after.
- Instances of bullying and name-calling are extremely rare. Pupils say that they are taught what to do if harassment occurs and that staff deal with concerns or worries that they might have swiftly.
- There are many opportunities for the pupils to develop their leadership skills, for example through being friendship buddies and monitors. Members of the school council have been very proactive in promoting various messages through posters such as those on saving paper and anti-bullying.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- High expectations for behaviour are set. The school is orderly, pupils respond quickly and correctly to instructions from staff. They manage their own behaviour well and are positive about the school's behaviour management system.
- School records show that incidents of poor behaviour in the classrooms are extremely rare. When they do occur, effective strategies are put in place to support pupils with

challenging behaviour so that learning is not disrupted.

- Pupils' attendance is above the national average. Evidence shows that where staff have worked with parents, the attendance of pupils has improved. Leaders have a coherent and successful strategy to address non-attendance issues and improve the achievement of individual pupils. Good attendance is recognised and suitably rewarded with attendance certificates and praise. The class that receives the highest attendance each week gets to keep 'Attendance Ted' in their classroom.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, at the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils attaining at the expected standard in reading and writing was above the national average and in line at the higher standard. Attainment in mathematics was in line with national averages at the expected standard and below at the higher standard.
- In the current Year 3 and Year 4, more pupils are on track to meet the end of key stage 2 expectations in reading, writing and mathematics than in previous years. This is due to the quality of teaching and targeting for these pupils. Across the school, pupils are now making the progress they should.
- Work in pupils' books demonstrates that pupils are making the progress they should to attain the expected levels and above because tasks are challenging enough for pupils of all abilities. In writing, however, pupils do not apply their writing skills to the same standard in subjects across the curriculum.
- Mathematics is taught well across the school. There is good coverage of the mathematical curriculum through fluency, reasoning and problem-solving, which are set in context. A high priority is placed on pupils learning their multiplication tables. As a result, their knowledge of multiplying is secure. Pupils' attitudes towards mathematics have improved greatly.
- Since the previous inspection, the most able pupils have had opportunities to achieve at a higher level. Teachers plan tailored activities to meet their specific needs and enable faster progress. Pupils demonstrate pride in their work in many subject areas. They are keen to show off their work from previous topics.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points compared to other pupils nationally. This means that they reach the expectations for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Strong leadership of the provision for pupils who have SEND means they receive timely, good-quality support and make good progress. These pupils are provided with a range of interventions to support their needs.
- Phonics teaching is delivered well overall. Pupils are taught how to pronounce the sounds accurately. Pupils make use of phonics strategies when decoding unknown words and make effective use of strategies in spellings. However, results currently reflect a decline in the proportions of pupils attaining the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- Reading is well taught across the school and pupils have positive attitudes towards reading. While developments have taken place, which have ensured that more pupils attain the higher standard in reading, leaders have identified that pupils do not yet

have a deeper understanding of the texts read.

- The introduction of a more efficient tracking system of outcomes for pupils means that teachers monitor more carefully pupils' achievement. Teachers now quickly identify pupils at risk of falling behind.
- Pupils' enthusiasm for school is evident. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education, both academically and personally.

Early years provision

Good

- Although the majority of children join the early years at a level that is typical for their age, some are weaker in communication and language, health and self-care, literacy and mathematics. However, due to effective teaching, children make good progress and increasingly reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year, including disadvantaged children.
- The early years is led and managed well. The leader has identified the obvious strengths and the areas for development accurately. Staff assess children's skills regularly and plan activities that are well matched to children's skills and interests.
- Children learn well and make strong progress from their starting points. The proportion of children attaining a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is above other schools nationally. Children develop positive attitudes to school life in the early years and are well prepared for moving into Year 1.
- Staff use the learning environment well. The atmosphere in the early years is purposeful and thriving. Children are motivated and engrossed in the activities that are provided for them. They persevere to complete tasks and are proud of their achievements when they do so. Different levels of challenge are built into activities. Children make effective use of resources and strategies such as number lines and 'holding a number' to work out the answers.
- Across the Reception classes and Nursery class, teachers create a welcoming learning environment which interests children in activities that they find enjoyable. Good teaching ensures that children get plenty of experiences in learning how to read and write. For example, children wrote wanted posters for pirates, using sentence starters and a wide range of vocabulary.
- Children are excited by the work planned for them as teachers have listened to their ideas and plan work accordingly. Children are well behaved and respectful towards one another. The interesting work areas encourage them to practise the skills they have learned, including the use of basic number facts and writing. Children in the Reception class are already showing increased skill in writing, with many children able to write clearly and use basic punctuation, including full stops, capital letters and exclamation marks, in their work.
- Children are well cared for and their well-being is of paramount importance. Children of all abilities, including disadvantaged children, achieve well.
- The school has developed effective partnership working with parents; they are clearly valued and contribute to the assessments made of children's progress throughout the early years. They are able to access the school's ongoing assessment records held in

their learning journals.

- Strong pastoral welfare, combined with very good teaching, ensures that children get off to a good start. Children's work reflects the progress that they make in their all-round development. Children with SEND are supported well to develop their communication, speech and language skills.

School details

Unique reference number	124284
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10088485

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Haywood
Headteacher (Executive)	David Swift
Telephone number	01785 840 314
Website	www.st-marys-wheatonaston.staffs.sch.uk
Email address	office@st-marys-wheatonaston.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 December 2016

Information about this school

- St Mary's C of E (C) First School is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It is federated with a local middle school and has an arrangement with a multi-academy trust.
- The executive headteacher is responsible for the leadership of the first and middle school. He is supported by two heads of school from the first school, and they share the role of headteacher.
- The school receives support from the middle school, a multi-academy trust, the diocese, the local authority and local schools.
- The number of pupils in each year group is uneven, and there are currently fewer pupils in Year 4. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are taught in mixed-age classes.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school's religious character was last inspected in July 2015.

- Children attend full-time in the Reception Year, and part-time in the nursery.
- Since the previous inspection, the leadership team has been restructured.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is slightly below average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average. Most pupils come from a White British background. Very few speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in all classes. An observation was conducted jointly with one of the headteachers.
- The inspector held discussions with the executive headteacher, the two headteachers, the head of school performance at the multi-academy trust, staff and members of the governing body. She also held a conversation by telephone with the diocesan improvement adviser.
- Groups of pupils from across the school met with the inspector. They also took the inspector on a tour of the school to share the curriculum work. The inspector listened to pupils in Years 1 and 2 read.
- The inspector scrutinised a sample of work produced by pupils from across the school. She considered information about pupils' current performance.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documents, both electronically and on paper. These included: development plans and evaluations of the school's progress; records of how leaders check on teaching; records of visits made by the diocesan improvement adviser and leaders from the multi academy trust; minutes of governing body meetings; policies; and records showing how the school supports disadvantaged pupils.
- The inspector took into account the 18 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 18 comments made using the free-text facility. She spoke to several parents bringing their children to school on the first day of the inspection. The inspector also took account of the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and pupils' survey.

Inspection team

Lynda Townsend, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
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