

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Fowler Road, Islington, London, N1 2EP

Inspection dates 12–13 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well, make good progress and reach broadly average levels of attainment. Attainment in reading is above average and the progress pupils make is outstanding.
- Teaching is good and so progress and learning across the school is good in most lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage behaviour well. They now plan precisely for pupils' needs, especially those eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those new to learning English.
- The headteacher and staff have built a harmonious learning community, where pupils are very safe and secure, love learning and behave well.
- The new headteacher, strongly supported by her senior team and governing body, provides a clear sense of purpose. Together, they have been a tenacious driving force in improving the quality of teaching and learning and in turn raising pupils' achievement.
- Leaders monitor the school's work robustly, hold staff to account for pupils' performance and are strongly focused on improving provision. They have not shirked from the difficult decisions needed to address weak teaching which had been holding back pupils' outcomes.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Progress is not better than good in mathematics and writing, because there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop higher-level writing and problem-solving skills.
- Teaching does not always extend or challenge the higher attaining pupils as much as it should and pupils are not always given sufficient opportunity to learn for themselves.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with a half days' notice.
- Twenty lessons or parts of lessons were observed, amounting to 12 hours in total. All seven classroom teachers present at the time of the inspection were observed teaching.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, members of the governing body and different groups of pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the school's work, policy documents, pupils' work and questionnaires returned by seven members of staff.
- In planning the inspection, inspectors noted that there were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), nor were any comments posted during the inspection. Discussions were held with groups of parents and carers at the beginning and the end of the school day during the inspection.

Inspection team

Michael Merchant, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Clementina Ogunsamo

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in one Reception class.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average, while those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Just over half of all pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic groups and a high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The majority of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is much higher than the proportion found nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection a new headteacher has been appointed and a high number of teachers have left or joined the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress pupils make in writing and mathematics to reach above average standards by:
 - ensuring that pupils are taught consistent methods of calculation in mathematics lessons and are provided with more challenging problem-solving tasks that extend their learning towards higher levels
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to write independently and more extensively in subjects and topics across the curriculum.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - making sure that activities planned always stretch and extend the higher attaining pupils to learn at a swifter pace
 - using questioning more consistently to assess and challenge pupils' understanding
 - giving pupils more responsibility for their own learning by encouraging them to be more active and inquisitive in class.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average overall and is high in reading. Attainment is improving strongly and all groups of pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points.
- Pupils make an excellent start in the Reception class in relation to their below expected starting points. Much effort has been put into supporting the areas where they have the greatest weakness, such as with their language, which has ensured they make exceptional gains in their communication skills.
- The quality of learning in lessons across the school is mainly good and in some it is outstanding. In an exciting Reception lesson, children were spellbound and totally captivated by the class teacher's animated and gripping use of song and imagery to convey the concept of number. They were fascinated as 'Pixie' flew around the room when they were not looking and mischievously took numbers from their number line. They then loudly shouted out the numbers that had been taken.
- The additional support provided for pupils who have particular needs, especially those new to learning English, those entitled to the pupil premium or whose circumstances make them vulnerable, is a great strength. The pupils supported make good and sometimes outstanding progress over time and the school is rapidly closing the gap between their attainment and those of all pupils nationally.
- Skilled and well-deployed teaching assistants provide very effective support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This enables them to overcome many of the barriers in their lives and make progress which is equal to that of their peers.
- Across the school, pupils make particularly strong gains in reading. This is largely due to the emphasis placed on developing pupils' reading skills across all subjects and the systematic programme of interventions for pupils who find learning difficult. These carefully planned programmes of one-to-one and small-group support are effective in raising pupils' attainment and self-esteem. The results of the recent phonic screening test in Year 1 show broadly average reading skills and by the time pupils reach Year 6, their attainment in reading is well above that expected of their age.
- The progress pupils make in their writing lags behind that made in reading. This is because, until very recently, too few planned opportunities have been provided for pupils to write high quality lengthy pieces of work across a range of different topics.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics, although good, is occasionally held back because some pupils have difficulty in explaining their ideas when they have read a text, which inhibits their ability to solve higher-level number problems expressed in words.

The quality of teaching is good

- The training, coaching and peer observations provided by the school and local authority, coupled with rigorous monitoring of teaching, have supported well the improvement in teachers' skills. Very precisely planned lessons, with different learning outcomes for pupils at different levels, support pupils' good progress.
- In the most effective lessons, a great deal is expected from pupils and they rise to this by trying hard with their work. Pupils are very clear that the success of their learning is because 'teachers always tell us exactly what we are to do and learn'.
- In many of the good or outstanding lessons observed there was a consistency of approach which led to pupils making good or better progress. In such lessons, pupils made the best progress when they were actively involved in their learning, and interaction between teachers and pupils was strong. In these lessons, teachers' brisk input is punctuated by short-burst tasks which not only help to keep pupils focused, but also enable teachers to keep a close check on how effectively all pupils are learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and their explanations are very clear so that learning builds carefully on what has

gone before. Teachers' skilful questioning and astute analysis of pupils' responses mean that learning is tailored well to pupils' ability.

- This is not always the case, however, and learning is sometimes held back because:
 - some staff miss opportunities to stretch high attaining pupils enough through demanding and challenging tasks
 - questioning is not always thorough, well directed or probing enough to encourage all to participate and articulate thoughtful answers
 - a few teachers talk for long periods which results in pupils becoming passive and over-reliant on the teacher.
- Across the school, marking is generally good and tells pupils clearly what they need to do to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils in all the lessons observed was at least good. Parents and carers spoken to at the beginning and the end of the school day confirm this is usual. The school's own records show that behaviour in lessons and around the school has been consistently good over a period of time and pupils spoken to say the behaviour is getting better and better. The procedures that the school has in place to deal with any incidents that might occur are comprehensive and records show these to be highly effective in preventing any disruption to other pupils' learning.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards school and their learning. There are strong relationships between the pupils and adults in the school and a mutual respect clearly exists.
- Pupils say bullying is extremely rare although they are aware that it has been an issue in the past. They clearly understand that there are different types of bullying and are confident that any bullying would be dealt with effectively.
- There are very positive relationships across the school between the wide range of different ethnic groups and pupils say that they feel safe. They are taught how to keep themselves safe and pupils have a good awareness of the dangers of social network sites on the internet.

The leadership and management are good

- Following the satisfactory outcomes of the last inspection there has been a concerted effort by senior staff, the governing body and the local authority to continue to improve the education pupils receive and especially the quality of teaching. Their tenacity has clearly paid dividends.
- The local authority has provided timely, consistent and effective support for the school, particularly in working with leaders to improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher has worked tenaciously to ensure that all staff know what is required of them and to ensure that teaching and the curriculum are effective in supporting pupils' learning.
- School leaders keep thorough checks on all aspects of school performance and manage the quality of teaching well. Leaders are especially effective at nurturing the skills of the newly appointed teachers, many of whom are new to teaching. The senior team use their excellent coaching and mentoring skills to provide constructive advice and training. Particularly good use is made of their most effective teachers to extend and share good practice. In this way, the quality of teaching and learning is steadily improving.
- Staff morale is high. A climate has been created where everyone is trying hard to make the school even better. Leaders' drive and ambition have resulted in staff's enthusiasm to 'get

things right'. Teachers and assistants are upbeat about the journey they have undertaken and the improved way they meet the needs of different pupils. Pupils' learning is now at the heart of everything they do. The school's evaluation of its performance is thorough and accurate. The school is working effectively with parents and carers to explore ways of involving them more fully in their children's learning.

- Teachers' performance is managed through regular monitoring of the quality of teaching in lessons and regular updating of subject expertise through continuing professional development. Teachers are provided with clear points for further development.
 - Currently, there are no significant differences in the progress of any groups which shows the school's commitment to equality of opportunity is translated into effective practice and there is no discrimination on any grounds. The school is rigorous in ensuring that all groups do as well as they can.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - members of the governing body are highly supportive but also have considerable drive in the pursuit of excellence
 - they challenge the school regularly and clearly hold senior leaders to account, especially when any pupils are not appearing to make better than expected progress or if any groups are starting to fall behind others
 - the governing body has ensured that the school meets all statutory obligations, including those relating to the safeguarding of pupils.
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What inspection judgements mean

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

School details

Unique reference number	100446
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	404726

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Nicholson
Headteacher	Genevieve Prayag
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 June 2011
Telephone number	020 73591870
Fax number	020 73593812
Email address	school@stmarys.islington.sch.uk

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