

St Mary Magdalen Catholic Primary School

Spring Street, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 3EF

Inspection dates	11–12 May 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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Teaching has improved substantially since the previous inspection. Consistently good teaching and assessment ensure that pupils learn well.
- Leaders have secured substantial, sustained improvements in the quality of pupils' work and in their achievement.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They achieve well by the end of Year 6 and are well prepared for secondary school.
- Standards are much higher at the end of both key stages in reading, writing and mathematics than at the time of the previous inspection.
- The curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school is a highly inclusive, friendly and welcoming community.
- Pupils behave well. They are considerate, courteous and respectful towards adults and each other. Pupils feel valued and very safe.
- Leaders have developed a positive, stimulating and caring atmosphere in early years. As a result, children thoroughly enjoy school and thrive.
- Disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress as their classmates.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and play an effective role in its development. They share the headteacher's ambition for the school and for all groups of pupils.
- Parents are highly positive about the school's work.
- Leaders and teachers ensure that those pupils new to the school learn routines and make friends quickly so they feel secure and comfortable.
- Leaders provide effective support for pupils who speak English as an additional language so that they make the same good progress as their classmates.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most-able pupils do not always achieve their full potential in mathematics.
- Some pupils' progress in mathematics is hampered by difficulty in understanding technical language.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Achieve the highest outcomes in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that the most-able pupils achieve their full potential in mathematics
 - giving pupils more opportunities to practise and strengthen mathematics language.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher's unwavering focus on improving teaching and learning since the previous inspection has been key to the school's increasing success in raising standards. She has strengthened leadership by working with subject leaders and governors to develop their roles. She is well supported by knowledgeable senior leaders and an effective and committed staff team.
- All staff and governors are determined to contribute to the school's ongoing journey of improvement. They share the headteacher's determination to make sure that all pupils flourish and achieve their very best, regardless of background, culture, gender or belief.
- Senior leaders know exactly how well pupils are learning, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able. They rigorously check and analyse pupils' progress in different subjects and year groups and discuss pupils' achievement with subject leaders and governors.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding very well to focus on pupils' wide-ranging individual needs. For example, leaders use specialist teaching and teaching assistant support to target pupils who are falling behind in English and mathematics so that they catch up with their classmates.
- Subject leaders have a good grasp of the quality of teaching and know where improvements are making a difference to pupils' progress. They regularly check pupils' books, visit lessons and meet with teachers to make suggestions and give advice. Leaders use staff meetings well to review how successfully developments in teaching are supporting pupils' learning.
- The inclusion leader plays a significant and successful role in ensuring that pupils who need extra help make the same good progress as their classmates. She works productively alongside teachers and teaching assistants to provide highly effective support for pupils with specific behavioural needs. The school's success is evident in some striking examples of improvement in individual pupil's attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- The school teaches a wide range of subjects, giving thoughtful attention to ways of engaging and motivating pupils' interest. For example, trips in the locality make learning relevant and raise pupils' awareness of their environment and of Brighton's history. Leaders recognise the need to give pupils more opportunities to use and practise mathematical language to strengthen their understanding in this subject and have suitable plans in place. The school provides clubs for pupils of all ages which appeal to differing interests, such as rugby, sewing, netball and art.
- The school develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding particularly well. Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences are interested in different viewpoints and appreciative and sensitive towards others. Many parents commented on the school's inclusive, family atmosphere. One said: 'If the world could learn from the ethos of tolerance and acceptance that this school creates it would be a happier, more peaceful place.' Almost all parents who completed Parent View feel the school is well led and managed and would recommend the school to another parent.
- Leaders give British values a high profile, giving pupils frequent opportunities to celebrate qualities such as understanding and fair play. For example, pupils regularly consider British values during assemblies, learn about key historical events which have influenced their lives today and participate in school council elections.
- Leaders use the primary school physical education and sports premium effectively. The physical education leader has used training and advice to increase teachers' subject knowledge and to improve the quality of sports teaching. Leaders have used funds to extend the number and range of clubs available so that pupils have greater choice. As a result, the proportion of pupils involved in extra-curricular sports clubs increased last year, with a third of pupils regularly participating in sport.
- The local authority has been responsive to developments in the school since the previous inspection. Representatives have worked very well with the headteacher, regularly visiting the school and contributing good-quality training for staff and governors. The local authority has gradually reduced levels of support over the past year in recognition of the school's increasing effectiveness.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body commissioned a review of its work following the previous inspection, acting on advice to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. As a result, governors have a much clearer view of the school's work. For example, governors have developed a much sharper focus on the progress made by different groups of pupils. They pay close attention to disadvantaged pupils' learning and

well-being, asking searching questions about how additional funds are used to raise achievement.

- Senior leaders and subject leaders regularly report developments in teaching and learning to governors and discuss the impact these have made on pupils' progress.
- Governors use visits to lessons to check specific aspects of the school's performance, such as reading and phonics (letters and the sounds that they make), combining what they see in the classroom with information about pupils' progress to develop a fuller picture of pupils' learning. One governor commented: 'We are more effective because we know what we are looking for and why.'
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff and governors are well qualified and alert to pupils' safety, including the potential risks of extremism and radicalisation. The headteacher does not shy away from difficult conversations with parents where they are necessary to check and ensure pupils' well-being. Parents appreciate her openness and honesty.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers continuously reflect on their own practice, trying out ideas and making improvements to their teaching. As a result, they make a valuable and important contribution to the school's development.
- Confident English teaching builds well on pupils' learning so they are securely equipped with technical skills in the use of grammar, spelling and punctuation. Teachers give pupils plenty of opportunities to use and improve reading and writing skills, including when working in different subjects.
- Considerable changes in the teaching of mathematics have strengthened and improved pupils' learning. For example, teachers pay closer attention to making sure mathematics teaching meets the needs of individual pupils and groups, including disadvantaged pupils. In the past, teaching has not always familiarised pupils sufficiently with the meaning and understanding of mathematical language. This is now a school focus, so that pupils can tackle problem-solving and reasoning tasks more securely.
- While teachers' expectations of pupils' learning are clearly much higher than they were at the time of the previous inspection, the work set for the most-able pupils in mathematics does not always challenge them sufficiently to ensure that they achieve their full potential in this subject.
- The teaching of reading, including the use of phonics, has improved since the previous inspection. For example, a specialist reading teacher has worked successfully alongside her colleagues to ensure consistently good-quality phonics teaching in key stage 1. As a result, teachers are more confident about teaching phonics and have higher expectations of their pupils, moving them on to the next stage in their learning more quickly than before. This means that pupils are better equipped to read and write successfully at an earlier point in their schooling.
- Teaching assistants work well with pupils, including those who have special educational needs or disability. They help pupils to persevere when activities are tricky by reassuring and praising them and by helping them to think through what they need to do to be successful.
- Teachers frequently check and mark pupils' work in line with the school's policy so that pupils know how well they are learning and understand where they need to improve.
- Teachers and teaching assistants skilfully support new arrivals to the school. For example, new pupils are partnered with one of their peers, a 'buddy', to help them to find their way around, learn routines and make friends. Teachers use resources well in lessons to strengthen and widen the vocabulary of those pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is good. Pupils from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds get on extremely well together. They respect differing beliefs and experiences and proudly speak about how they help each other in school.
- Attendance is above the national average and continues to improve. Persistent absenteeism has reduced since the previous inspection.
- Pupils know what they can do to keep themselves and others safe. For example, they know how to use the internet safely and play happily and safely in the playground. Pupils carry out responsibilities seriously. For example, the oldest pupils supervise pupils on the stairs before and after assemblies very

sensibly, giving the younger pupils occasional reminders about the rules so that there are no mishaps.

- School records confirm pupils' views that bullying rarely happens. Pupils say that the headteacher will not put up with any unkindness and quickly sorts out any worries. One commented: 'People will help you if you are upset.'
- Almost all parents who completed Parent View feel that pupils are happy and safe in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy school and behave well in lessons and during playtimes. They move between classrooms quickly and quietly and settle to work promptly in lessons.
- Pupils are courteous and friendly, greeting adults and visitors politely and warmly as they move around school.
- Pupils want to do their best and are keen to learn in lessons. However, occasionally a few find it hard to stay focused during lessons and become fidgety, so that their progress slows.
- All parents who completed Parent View feel that pupils are well behaved.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Improved teaching means that pupils make better progress across the school than at the time of the previous inspection in a wide range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics. In 2015, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 increased sharply in all subjects to match national averages. Standards at the end of key stage 2 have improved substantially over the past three years and have been in line with national averages for the past two years.
- The work in pupils' workbooks illustrates their good progress in English and mathematics, as well as other subjects such as religious education and history. Most pupils take care to work neatly in all subjects so that their work is tidy. The increasingly good quality of their work reflects pupils' growing pride in their achievements.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Younger readers routinely use phonics knowledge to help them to read, confidently having a go at unknown and tricky words. The oldest pupils read with interest, expression and understanding.
- The results of the Year 1 phonics check have improved since the previous inspection and were in line with national averages in 2015. Better phonics teaching and increased expectations ensure that disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress in developing key reading and writing skills as their classmates. The gap between disadvantaged pupils' performance in the Year 1 phonics check has narrowed during the current year, with more on track to achieve expected levels in 2016.
- Good-quality support for pupils who have special educational needs or disability ensures that they make rapid progress. Resources such as illustrated word banks help them to write successfully in English lessons, while practical equipment effectively supports their learning in mathematics.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well. They learn how to speak English securely and with increasing confidence during key stage 1. This ensures that they are well placed for learning in key stage 2 so that their progress accelerates during the older year groups, particularly in writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. In 2015, the gaps between disadvantaged pupils' attainment and other pupils nationally narrowed substantially in all subjects at the end of key stage 1 and in reading and writing at key stage 2. An increase in the gap in mathematics at the end of Year 6 was caused by a number of factors, including some pupils with a range of additional needs, which hampered their achievement. Information about disadvantaged pupils currently in the school indicates they make good progress in mathematics.
- Pupils rapidly develop secure writing skills as they move up through the year groups. In Year 2, most can use different types of sentence to good effect and punctuate their work correctly. By Year 6, pupils write effectively for a range of different purposes and audiences, skilfully using vocabulary to develop setting and atmosphere. The most-able pupils achieve well in English, including those who are disadvantaged.
- In mathematics, pupils learn to use their knowledge of number to solve mathematical problems with increasing confidence and success. However, while they develop a secure grasp of number and learn how to complete formal calculations competently by the end of Year 6, some struggle with some of the mathematical vocabulary required for problem-solving and reasoning. Leaders have already identified this aspect of mathematics as an area which needs further attention, with suitable plans in place to improve

pupils' mathematical vocabulary.

- In some classes, the most-able pupils make good progress in mathematics because teachers set them challenging work which extends their learning well. For example, Year 6 pupils tackle problems which require them to use a combination of their understanding of volume and time to reach a successful conclusion. Pupils clearly relish this degree of challenge, as reflected in the comment one pupil wrote to his teacher in his mathematics book: 'I want to do something like this again please!' However, this positive picture is not evident in all classes, so that some of the most-able pupils make slightly slower progress.

Early years provision

is good

- Children are interested, curious and keen to learn. They happily join in with a wide range of activities, work hard and have great fun at school.
- Children enjoy playing and learning with their friends and get on very well together. They copy the caring and respectful way adults relate to children and to each other and so quickly learn social skills, such as sharing and taking turns. Children want to please and do their best to follow the rules. They behave well.
- Substantial improvements in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection have quickened children's progress. Children achieve well in all aspects of learning. The proportion achieving a good level of development has increased dramatically since the previous inspection, rising to above-average levels in 2015. This ensures that children are well prepared for the next stage of their learning in Year 1.
- All groups of children make equally good progress. Disadvantaged children make the same rapid progress as their classmates. A significant improvement in the proportion of disadvantaged children achieving a good level of development in 2015 ensured that their achievement was in line with their classmates and well above national average.
- Leaders quickly pinpoint children's needs when they join Nursery and Reception. They plan activities carefully to interest and motivate children. They keep a close eye on children's progress, quickly giving those children whose progress may be slowing extra support.
- Leaders have made a significant difference to the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher took decisive and successful action to address weaknesses in teaching following the previous inspection and has worked closely with the early years leader, staff and parents to raise expectations. Leaders' unwavering focus on making sure every child flourishes has been key to lifting outcomes at the end of Reception.
- The early years leader is passionate about ensuring that every child achieves well. His empathy with the children and their families, as well as his colleagues, makes a strong contribution to the quality of teaching and learning, the upbeat atmosphere and to children's well-being.
- Adults' effective focus on developing language and social skills underpins children's good progress. Children's growing vocabulary means they become increasingly confident in expressing their ideas, both verbally and in writing. This ensures that they make very rapid progress in literacy and social development. Some, however, are a little slower to grasp the mathematical vocabulary needed to make the best progress possible in number and in shape, space and measure.
- Leaders have raised expectations of children's learning in phonics. Adults introduce children to letters and sounds sooner than at the time of the previous inspection and move children on to new learning more quickly than before. As a result, children make very good progress in reading and writing.
- Highly engaging, stimulating activities ensure that children are inspired to read and write. For example, children enjoy the competitive element of activities such as word hunts, practising phonics skills as they find and match each new word. They enthusiastically write about subjects which have caught their imagination, such as animals and space, proudly sharing their writing with adults and with each other.
- Leaders have established a strong, effective early years team. All adults play their part in making sure that children are nurtured and safe.
- Weekly 'rhyme time' sessions for parents and children in early years provide a relaxed opportunity for parents to enjoy traditional rhymes with their children while picking up tips about how they can help their children to read at home. Parents are very positive about the way their children have settled into school and are confident that they are doing well.

School details

Unique reference number	114541
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10012242

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Fryer Margaret McHugh (co-chairs)
Headteacher	Halden Eady
Telephone number	01273 327533
Website	www.stmarymags.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Email address	office@stmarymags.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is higher than that found in most schools. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides part-time early years provision in a Nursery class and full-time early years provision in a Reception class.
- The school meets the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning in 13 lessons or part lessons, including four observed jointly with a senior leader.
- The inspection team held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, members of staff, parents and pupils. A meeting also took place with the two co-chairs of the governing body and two other governors.
- The inspection team took account of the 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, they considered the views expressed by parents who spoke with them informally during the school day. They also took account of the views expressed in 30 responses to the staff questionnaire and 28 completed pupil questionnaires.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and considered a range of documents, including the improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and attendance and safeguarding policies.
- The inspection team looked at a sample of pupils' work provided by the school, as well as looking at pupils' work in lessons. They also listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 reading.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Rosemary Addison

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
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