

St Mary's Catholic School

Peverell Road, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 2AT

Inspection dates

12–13 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Turbulence in leadership and no permanent headteacher until September 2016 have had a detrimental effect on pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have not introduced a reliable method to check and evaluate pupils' progress. Consequently, leaders have not gained an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching in the school.
- Governors have failed to hold senior leaders to account for the school's poor performance. Pupils leave the school poorly prepared for their next stage of education.
- The academy trust has not acted quickly enough to ensure that stable leadership at all levels in the school leads to good outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have not sufficiently held teachers to account for pupils' declining achievement.
- There is too much inconsistency in teaching. Some teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to achieve are too low. The most able pupils in particular do not receive the challenge they need in reading and writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not receive the support they need to make good progress from their starting points.
- The early years provision does not help children to make the progress of which they are capable.

The school has the following strengths

- The newly appointed headteacher has worked decisively to improve the standard of education.
- The teaching of mathematics is leading to good outcomes for pupils across most of the school.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve pupils' overall attendance.
- Pupils' courtesy and good behaviour contribute to a harmonious community.
- Parents are very positive about the recent changes. They have confidence in the new headteacher.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - all assessments of pupils' progress are accurate and are used rigorously to check that pupils are on track to make at least good progress
 - leaders' plans for improvement are sharply focused on priorities and show the steps which must be taken to improve the school's effectiveness and the impact these actions will have on raising pupils' outcomes
 - middle leaders monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility so that they can contribute strongly to improvement
 - the newly formed governing body has sufficient and accurate information to provide robust challenge for senior leaders
 - teaching is effective in meeting the individual needs of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment quickly by ensuring that teachers:
 - raise expectations of what all groups of pupils can achieve and improve pupils' progress, particularly for the most able pupils in reading and writing
 - accurately understand what pupils can and cannot do and use this knowledge to eradicate any gaps in learning
 - increase their subject knowledge in English so that they can plan the next steps in pupils' learning effectively, particularly for the most able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - in the early years, use the assessment information to plan for the needs of all groups of children to be fully met.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Since the school became an academy in April 2014, there has been a high turnover of teachers and a void of permanent leadership in the school. Plymouth CAST has drawn upon experienced leaders from other schools to temporarily bridge gaps in staffing. Although there have been improvements in aspects such as pupils' behaviour over this time, leaders have been unable to secure a firm foundation for academic success.
- Leaders have been too slow to improve pupils' outcomes. They have introduced a system for tracking pupils' progress but have failed to verify that teachers' assessments are accurate. Leaders have not checked work in books with sufficient rigour to gain a clear understanding of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Consequently, leaders' evaluation of the school's performance is over-generous.
- The school's plans for improvement do not reflect an understanding of the urgency needed to bring about a strong recovery in pupils' progress. In some cases, leaders' plans are lists of tasks to do with no clear timescales. This slows down the rate of improvement and does not provide leaders with the information they need to take steps to improve the school further.
- Leaders have not shied away from tackling the very weakest teaching but more needs to be done. In the past, leaders did not use the performance management of staff to raise standards. The new headteacher, who joined the school in September 2016, has plans in place to tackle this, but has not had time to implement them.
- The school has not made effective use of additional pupil premium funding to help disadvantaged pupils to catch up. The new headteacher has rightly identified this as an area to improve. Leaders have been more successful in their work to support disadvantaged pupils who have social and emotional needs. As a result, these pupils are able to manage their feelings better.
- Senior leaders fail to promote equality of opportunity because not all pupils are given the chance to reach their potential. This is because leaders do not deal with inconsistencies in the quality of teaching swiftly enough.
- The headteacher has begun to build a team of middle leaders to drive improvements. She has quickly gained the support of the school staff and the confidence of parents. The capacity for improvement is limited because work is at a very early stage and there has been too little time to see any impact on pupils' achievement.
- There is an impressive range of extra-curricular activities, eagerly and regularly attended by pupils of various ages. Leaders have used physical education (PE) and sport funding to develop staff expertise in teaching PE as well as employing specialist coaches to inspire pupils. Parents speak positively about the increased range of sporting activities and clubs on offer and are particularly delighted that their children now have the opportunity to take part in competitions with other schools.

- The current curriculum does not challenge pupils enough to ensure that they learn successfully. Groups of pupils do not make the progress they should. Work in topic books confirms that progress in too many other subjects is also weak.
- Specialist music teaching and a well-planned sports curriculum are providing pupils with a breadth of experiences to develop creatively and physically. Most notably, parents highlight the increased number of school trips and the broader range of after-school activities over the past year. They say that these are helping their children to enjoy school.
- Leaders have tackled poor attendance effectively. Pupils' overall attendance has improved. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average. This, together with improved behaviour, is an important step in creating the right conditions to begin to tackle the weak achievement of this group.
- The school provides effective opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. A recent visitor from the Houses of Parliament supported pupils' understanding of democracy. Children in the school council were involved in the recent recruitment of their new headteacher. Religious education lessons help pupils to gain an understanding about different cultures and religions. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils researched and sensitively discussed the similarities and differences in marriage ceremonies across different faiths. The 'marriage promises' they wrote reflected a clear understanding of the ritual.
- It is recommended that newly qualified teachers are not appointed.

Governance of the school

- Governors have lacked sufficiently robust procedures for challenging school leaders on the school's progress. The trust suspended governors' powers in 2015 and instigated an enhanced support group (ESG) to take on the role of holding leaders to account. This challenge has led to improved pupil attendance. However, weak assessment procedures are masking poor progress for some groups.
- Until recently, governors have been unclear about their role in ensuring a good quality of education for all pupils. Governors are now more aware of how the school is performing and are better trained in asking challenging questions of school leaders. However, their challenge is yet to result in substantial improvement in teaching and achievement across the school.
- Governors have a basic understanding of the pupil premium funding and report that pupil premium children 'are not doing as well as they should'. Such analysis is imprecise because governors have failed in their responsibility to ensure that there is a clear evaluation of the impact that this funding is having on improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors know how the PE and sport premium funding is enhancing pupils' physical development, health and well-being.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils feel safe in school and talk meaningfully about the importance of sensible use of social media.

- The designated safeguarding lead is effective in providing timely support for pupils and their families. Staff are confident about their role in making referrals should any concerns be raised. School documentation shows that leaders follow up concerns swiftly and liaise effectively with other agencies to ensure that pupils are free from harm.
- Staff induction is thorough. Leaders provide effective training to ensure that new staff are confident in applying the school's procedures to keep pupils safe.
- Some aspects around the administration of safeguarding documentation are not well organised.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- A high staff turnover has left the school with a mainly new teaching team. Previous information on pupils' achievement is unreliable. Teachers do not always match activities to support pupils' particular needs. As a result, inconsistencies exist in the achievement of groups of pupils across the school.
- When teaching phonics, teachers do not adapt lessons to meet the needs of the pupils. Pupils were observed learning the same sounds in October as they learned last June.
- Pupils do not apply their phonics skills successfully in other writing. The new leaders have raised the expectations of how pupils should apply their phonics to develop and extend writing. While teachers are expecting more of pupils, poor use of assessment still severely hinders pupils' progress.
- Teachers do not always question pupils well to check their prior knowledge or to extend pupils' understanding in subjects other than mathematics. Not all teachers follow the school's agreed marking policy. Work in books, particularly from the last academic year, shows that pupils' misconceptions too often go unnoticed.
- There is too much variation in the quality of feedback given to pupils to help them to improve. Teachers have only very recently begun to follow leaders' guidance on using 'Wow' and 'Now' statements. Where teachers' subject knowledge is not strong, their feedback is not helping pupils to make the progress they could.
- The teaching of reading across the school is inadequate. The most able are not challenged to make the progress of which they are capable. Similarly, where pupils have weaker phonics skills, teachers do not help them to achieve. The new headteacher has encouraged teachers to use books more widely to engender a love of reading. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this initiative on pupils' progress.
- The teaching of mathematics is stronger than for English. The school's new calculation policy is being applied consistently by teachers and is supporting the pupils to make better progress, particularly in Years 2 to 6. Pupils say that they enjoy mathematics because it makes them think.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school provides a calm and orderly environment for pupils to focus on their learning. Pupils are respectful of each other and of adults in the school. They are keen to welcome visitors to the school and new pupils quickly settle into school routines because of the kindness and support they receive.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They have a strong awareness about internet safety and keeping safe in the water, for example. Parents have great faith in the school to keep their child safe. They say that the school's website also provides a wealth of resources that helps them to support their child to remain free from harm.
- The democratically elected school council provides pupils with significant opportunities to influence change. For example, school council members recently took part in the interviewing process to appoint the new headteacher. Pupils play a full part in community and fund-raising events and enjoy making a positive contribution to society.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to help those disadvantaged pupils who need social and emotional support and to improve their attendance. Therapy workshops help pupils to develop positive attitudes and support their emotional resilience. Activities such as breakfast club provide pupils with a healthy meal and a nurturing start to their day.
- The broad array of clubs and sporting activities encourages pupils to be active and to have healthy lifestyles. The many team and personal sporting activities on offer also help pupils to develop resilience when faced with challenges and a sense of pride in their achievements.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Since September, the new headteacher has established higher expectations in pupils' presentation of their work. Current work books reflect a marked improvement in the neatness with which pupils present their work this year. Pupils now demonstrate great pride in their work and learning.
- Attendance rates have improved rapidly. Pupils talk enthusiastically about winning the attendance trophy. The number of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent is now below the national average.
- Pupils are well mannered and eager to please. Even when teachers plan work that is too easy or too hard, pupils do their very best and complete their own additional activities. Pupils demonstrate great inner resilience and motivation to achieve and help each other.
- Pupils are polite and engage confidently with adults. Pupils told inspectors, 'We are taught to cooperate. We are a team and we all help out. If there are children who are feeling left out, we help them to fit in.'

- Parents and pupils were adamant that poor behaviour and bullying were extremely rare. Pupils told inspectors that, 'Teachers care for us and make us feel safe.' Pupils work and play together well to make a good contribution to the safe and happy atmosphere in the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Overall, outcomes are not good enough. Pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable. This is especially so for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school's senior leaders have identified that assessment information is not accurate. Systems for tracking the progress and attainment of pupils are in their infancy. Currently, there is little accurate or robust information about pupils' progress and attainment.
- Differences between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally exist at the end of every key stage and subject with the exception of mathematics at key stage 1. Current outcomes in different year groups show little sign of the differences diminishing.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is too erratic. This is due to their needs not being clearly identified or catered for.
- Outcomes for children in the early years have been below the national average since the school converted to an academy. Outcomes in 2016 represented a decline from the previous year.
- Not enough pupils meet the expected standard in phonics compared with those nationally. The gap between the school's results and the national average is growing. Insufficient use is made of assessment to help pupils make the progress of which they are capable. The difference between disadvantaged pupils and others shows no sign of decreasing.
- Overall, pupils in Year 1 have not made sufficient progress in reading, writing and mathematics since the end of the Reception Year. As a result, pupils enter Year 2 requiring significant 'catch up', particularly in reading and writing.
- Inequalities seen in the early years for groups of children remain an issue by the end of Year 2. Girls achieved better than the boys and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making little progress. However, effective targeted teaching in Year 2 in 2016 did lead to better outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- In 2016, just over half of the Reception children achieved the expected standard in reading. Pupils' attainment in reading at the end of key stage 1 was also below the national average. Similarly, at the end of Year 6, outcomes in reading remained below the national average. This does not represent good enough progress from pupils' starting points. Pupils who struggle with reading do not catch up quickly enough.

- Pupils' achievement in writing at the end of key stages 1 and 2 reflects some encouraging signs of improvement, with proportions achieving the expected level in writing exceeding the national average for the first time. This reflects the strong focus in these particular year groups in 2016. However, current work in books across the school other than in Years 2 and 6 reflects an inconsistent picture. Pupils' writing contains too many errors in punctuation, spelling and grammar.
- Previous underachievement in mathematics is being eroded thanks to better teaching. There is an improving picture at key stage 1, with outcomes in mathematics improving to above the national average in 2015 and 2016. Work in books shows that pupils are now making stronger progress in Years 2 to 6.
- The achievement of the most able pupils in reading is too variable across the school. Although some of these pupils reach higher levels of attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, their progress is very uneven. Most-able pupils do not receive sufficient challenge to read widely and become proficient readers throughout their time in school. Similarly, the most able writers do not receive sufficient guidance and support and this hinders the accuracy and flair with which they write.

Early years provision

Inadequate

- Children do not make the progress of which they are capable during their time in the early years. As a result, they are not well prepared for Year 1.
- Outcomes at the end of the early years are below the national average. This does not represent good progress from children's starting points. Differences in the achievement of boys and girls in 2015 continue to exist. In 2016, the gap between boys' and girls' attainment was higher than for the previous year. Children's achievement remains low, particularly in reading and writing.
- Leaders have introduced a new system to assess children when they join the school as they correctly identified that previous assessments have been weak. Currently, the information on children's starting points and their progress remains inaccurate.
- The new early years leader is unable to account for the difference that the additional early years funding makes to children's progress. End-of-year outcomes in both 2015 and 2016 and current information on children's achievements reflect that the funding is not directed with sufficient focus to ensure that children make the rapid gains required.
- Leaders have correctly identified the need to develop the learning environment. There are now plentiful opportunities for children to develop their early reading, writing and number skills in the safe, bright and inspiring provision. However, teachers do not check that these areas are used or that they are making a difference to children's learning. As a result, inequalities continue to exist. For example, boys do not develop their mark making to the extent that the girls do.
- The quality of teaching in the early years is inconsistent. Expectations of what children can achieve are too low. Adults' interactions with children are not used consistently to extend or reinforce learning. Similarly, inaccurate letter formation goes uncorrected by adults and, at worst, is praised as being correct.

- The teaching of phonics does not extend children’s learning beyond initial sounds. Despite children showing an ability to write three-letter words on their own, phonics sessions restricted them to recording an initial letter. A lack of challenge meant that the most able children were not challenged to write simple sentences.
- Leaders ensure that children are safe from harm. Parents say that they are happy with the contact between home and school and that staff are approachable.
- The routines that teachers have established ensure that children cooperate well with each other and respond appropriately to adults’ requests. Children are friendly and polite. Relationships are warm and trusting and leaders ensure that the environment is safe and secure so that children are free from harm.

School details

Unique reference number	140778
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10020054

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	195
Appropriate authority	academy trust
Chair	Helen Curnow
Headteacher	Demelza Bolton
Telephone number	01736 330005
Website	www.st-marys-catholic.eschools.co.uk
Email address	head@st-marys-rc-pz.cornwall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school and is part of the Plymouth CAST. The Trust was formed in April 2014. 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 joined the Trust and became an academy on 1 April 2014. When its predecessor school, St Mary's Catholic Combined School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- At the time the school was notified of the inspection the school did not meet requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. It did not comply with Department for Education guidance to provide details of the academy trust's scheme of delegation for governance functions.

- The school does not comply with the Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish. The school does not publish information of up-to-date evaluations on pupil premium and sport premium expenditure.
- In 2015, Plymouth CAST engaged support from a national leader of education who is headteacher of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Falmouth.
- In 2015, the trust suspended the previous governing body and formed an enhanced support group (ESG). In September 2016, a new governing body was formed.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Children in the early years provision are accommodated on a part-time basis. Most children transfer to the full-time Reception class at the end of their time in Nursery.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is above the national average.
- An average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information of up-to-date evaluations of pupil premium and PE and sport premium expenditure.
- The school runs a daily breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classes across the school, some jointly with senior leaders.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, area adviser from the trust, senior and middle leaders, and with two representatives of the local governing body.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of documents, including notes of meetings, school improvement plans and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- The inspectors gained the views of pupils throughout the inspection, including at break- and lunchtimes.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work in their books together with the senior leaders, to establish the current quality of pupils' work and progress over time.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and spoke to groups of pupils to seek their views about the school. The views of other pupils were gathered during lessons, playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of parents.

Inspection team

Tracy Hannon, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Aisha Waziri	Ofsted Inspector
Tonwen Empson	Her Majesty's 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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