

St Mary the Virgin CofE Primary School

High Street, Hartfield, East Sussex TN7 4AA

Inspection dates	6–7 July 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

- The headteacher leads the school with energy and total commitment. Her actions since taking up her position have ensured that this is now a good school.
- Senior leaders have had a big impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since joining the school.
- Governors understand the school and its context well. They have ensured that the school has improved and aspire for it to be outstanding.
- Those very few pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who have special educational needs or disabilities make good progress from their different starting points.
- The quality of teaching has improved to be good overall and is having a positive impact on the outcomes of pupils.
- Pupils make good progress from their different starting points because of the good quality of teaching.
- Teachers enjoy planning exciting and engaging learning opportunities. As a consequence, pupils enjoy coming to school and display very good attitudes to learning.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start because of the quality of provision and the care and support they receive.
- The behaviour of pupils is good because staff have high expectations, and support for pupils with complex emotional needs is effective.
- The school’s work to keep children safe is very effective.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Outcomes in writing are not strong enough.
- Improvement planning needs to focus more on the key actions required for the school to become outstanding.
- Middle leaders do not have enough impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure outstanding outcomes for pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that raising outcomes in writing is given a high priority in order for them to improve to at least match those presently seen for reading and mathematics.
- Enable middle leaders to have more of an impact on further developing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in order for the outcomes of pupils to become outstanding.
- Refine improvement planning so that school leaders and governors can clearly focus on the key actions that will enable the school to become outstanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since taking up her appointment in November 2015, the headteacher has worked with a clear focus on improving all aspects of the school. In a short period of time, her leadership has ensured that standards are rising and the quality of teaching is good and improving.
- The partnership at senior leadership level between the headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator is strong. Together they have instilled a culture of 'learning together' among teaching staff, who are reflective and open to advice and guidance on how to develop their classroom practice.
- Communication between staff, including non-teaching support staff, is strong. Teachers appreciate the one-to-one meetings they have every fortnight with the headteacher, not least because they focus on supporting their well-being, as well as on monitoring their performance in classrooms and the impact this has on the progress pupils are making.
- The school's assessment system is effective and ensures school leaders and teaching staff are able to track the progress of individual pupils well. This is especially important due to the low numbers in each year group and very small numbers of pupils from different vulnerable groups.
- The curriculum inspires and engages pupils well and is based on whole-school 'learning journeys' which all classes follow concurrently. Staff like this approach because of the opportunities it brings to work together to plan exciting lessons. Pupils enjoy finding out about what other classes are learning and look forward to sharing their newfound knowledge with the rest of the school at the end of each 'journey'.
- Pupils benefit from a good range of extra-curricular activities, including residential trips for older pupils or educational visits to places such as the observatory and science centre at Herstmonceux. Maypole dancing, reporting on 'alien' invasions and burying time capsules are all recent activities designed to enrich and enliven the learning experiences of pupils across the school.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is served well. School leaders have ensured that there is a restorative approach when things go wrong. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own actions and the impact they have on others, as well as making connections with the collective actions of society and the impact they might have on climate change or the destruction of rainforests.
- School leaders take their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 very seriously and ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Tolerance and respect for the opinions of others sit at the heart of the school's culture. Discrimination is not tolerated. The concepts of democracy and the rule of law are well understood, especially by older pupils, who were in the middle of their own fevered election campaign to elect a 'headteacher for the day' during the inspection.
- Extra government funding to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is spent well. School leaders and governors monitor the progress of these pupils diligently to ensure their outcomes are good.
- Funding to enhance physical education and sport in primary schools is also used wisely. The school employs a specialist coach to support class teachers in planning and delivering lessons, as well as training older pupils to act as play leaders at breaktimes. Pupils also take part in local sporting events. During the inspection, pupils from key stage 2 attended a local schools' athletics tournament.
- The local authority and diocese board support the school well, providing good-quality advice and guidance for the headteacher and governing body alike. The support of a national leader of education, who is the headteacher of a local outstanding school, has been particularly beneficial to the headteacher.
- Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is honest and credible. However, because of the need for wide-scale improvement in the recent past, improvement planning has become overly broad and very detailed, with the time required to monitor progress and prepare reports for governors in danger of impinging on the effectiveness of the day-to-day leadership of the school.
- Because of the need for senior leaders to bring about rapid improvement in a short period of time, the impact of middle leaders on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet as effective as it could be.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body takes its responsibilities seriously. Governors have ensured that the school has effective leadership and they have not been afraid to take decisive action when needed. They have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school, as well as the areas that still need to be better.
 - Governors understand the balance required between active support and rigorous challenge for school leaders. This has ensured sustained improvement in the last year, especially in the quality of teaching and the impact this has on the progress pupils make.

- Governors realise that improvement planning needs to be more refined, so that it focuses on the aspects which will have greatest impact on improving the school, while allowing them to hold school leaders to account more effectively. This will also create capacity for governors and school leaders in their partnership in maintaining the good pace of improvement which is now evident.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders and governors ensure that the protection and safety of children are given the highest importance. Training is up to date and appropriate for the level of responsibility held by different staff. Procedures for the start and end of the school day are sound. The school site is well maintained and staff are proactive in assessing potential risks to children, including completing risk assessments for pupils travelling off-site on school trips. Parents who spoke to the inspector at the start of the inspection expressed a view that their children were well cared for in school and that the school was a safe place for their children to be. A very small number of parents expressed negative views about behaviour and safety in the online parent survey, Parent View.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching is consistently good. Because of this, pupils enjoy coming to school and are making good progress with their learning. This is true in all classes and phases of the school, which, because of its size, operates with one Reception class and three classes combining Years 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and 5 and 6.
- Teachers enjoy the freedom they have to plan exciting and engaging lessons based on agreed whole-school learning journeys. Ensuring pupils make links with what they are learning to real life adds purpose, allowing them to understand the context of much of what they learn.
- During the inspection, candidates from Year 5 and 6 debated their personal manifestos to become headteacher for the day in front of pupils from Year 3 and 4. Questions were taken and views exchanged, before votes were cast in booths with a 'voting officer' in attendance. One boy enjoyed the session so much he declared he wanted to be a politician when he grew up. Other pupils were less sure.
- Teachers use the school's new assessment system increasingly well. They have regular training in using it as effectively as possible to plan learning and track pupil progress, including a recent update from a specialist consultant.
- Classrooms are industrious places where pupils work hard and teaching staff offer appropriate challenge. Pupils understand what they are learning, and why, because teachers make their expectations very clear. Most lessons observed were interspersed with high-quality dialogue between staff and pupils, ensuring pupils stayed on task and made progress.
- Making cross-curricular links is a strong feature in classrooms which allows pupils to become deeply immersed in themes and topics, while maintaining breadth and balance as subjects are linked together. This also allows pupils to develop their writing skills across a range of subjects. This has become a particular focus for teachers, who know that outcomes in writing are not as strong as those in reading and mathematics.
- Occasionally, teaching staff miss chances to extend learning during lessons and fail to capitalise on opportunities to correct misconceptions or consolidate previous learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pastoral support is strong, especially for pupils with complex needs or those who encounter barriers to learning.
- The school's culture of learning together encourages pupils to consider the needs of their peers and leads to good relationships in the classroom and on the playground. Pupils are keen to learn, including from one another, and show very positive attitudes to learning.
- There was a great sense of empathy throughout the inspection. Staff care about the children. Children in turn care for one another. This was particularly clear at breaktimes when play leaders provided ideas for games and monitored the buddy bench, 'just in case'.
- Pupils told the inspector that 'most people get along fine', and 'this is a best friend forever school'. They spoke freely to share their opinions of the school and how they feel safe because staff always make sure the school gates and doors are closed, and watch out for them if they fall over. They also know what to do if the fire alarm sounds and are aware of the potential danger of the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. All staff take responsibility for behaviour and expectations are high. This is particularly the case when pupils move around the school between lessons or at the start and end of the school day.
- Classrooms are orderly and harmonious places. Throughout the inspection pupils were deeply engaged with their learning and there was no disruption to learning or off-task behaviour. However, pupils told the inspector this has not always been the case, although teachers are now 'strict' and control poor behaviour well.
- Attendance is good and better than the national average, although the school constantly monitors a small number of pupils who do not attend as regularly as they might. The school has been particularly successful when working in partnership with parents to reduce persistent absence in the last year.
- A small minority of parents expressed negative views about behaviour in the online questionnaire, Parent View. However, the vast majority of parents expressed positive views, including all those who spoke to the inspector during the inspection.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Outcomes for pupils are good. Most pupils are making good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes children in the Reception class who make good progress from their varying starting points.
- Because there are low pupil numbers in each year group, making comparisons with national averages is not helpful when considering outcomes. This is especially the case for different pupil groups including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, and those with special educational needs or disabilities.
- The school's provision for phonics is sound. Most pupils achieve the expected standard during Year 1. Last year, all pupils had reached the expected standard by the end of Year 2, which is the case again this year.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are ready for the demands of the key stage 2 curriculum. In national tests last year, girls performed much better than boys in reading, writing and mathematics. This year, the balance has been redressed.
- Pupils make good progress in key stage 2. Last year nearly every pupil left the school having reached at least the nationally expected level in reading, writing and mathematics combined.
- The few pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds make good progress because of the quality of teaching they receive. School leaders track their progress relentlessly and ensure appropriate support, including for the well-being of individual pupils, should it be required. All disadvantaged pupils made at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they left Year 6 last year.
- Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities receive focused support, especially those who are in danger of falling behind. Because of this, most make good progress. One parent who spoke to the inspector was particularly positive about the support her child had received since joining the school from another local school.
- Pupils capable of achieving at higher levels make good progress because teachers have high expectations and ensure that the most able pupils are challenged well.
- Currently, most pupils across the school are making at least good progress. This is especially the case in reading and mathematics. School leaders have identified that while progress is good in writing, not all pupils are making the progress seen in reading and mathematics. Because of this, accelerating progress to improve outcomes in writing will be a focus for improvement planning in the new school year.

Early years provision

is good

- Provision for children in the early years is good. Because of low numbers in each cohort, staff know each individual very well and are able to plan next steps in learning based on detailed assessments of the progress being made by each child towards each learning goal.
- Strong leadership, including that of the headteacher, has ensured that the quality of teaching in the Reception Year is good, leading to good outcomes for children. Most make good progress and are well prepared for the move to Year 1.

- During the inspection, most children concentrated very well and enjoyed the levels of challenge staff set for them, especially in teacher-led input such as phonics lessons. During one session a child was delighted at her own success in sounding out and writing a difficult word, calling out 'I did it, I did it!' This was immediately followed up by the teacher, who set the task of writing a similar word, building on the excitement of success, and ensuring the level of challenge was maintained.
- Children in the Reception class are positive about their learning and confident with their surroundings. They were quite happy to share their ideas with the inspector, including their thoughts on the kind of creatures they might find in a jungle, at the same time as others explained their special 'descriptive words' as they wrote on leaves.
- Children from disadvantaged backgrounds do well in the early years, making good progress from their different starting points.
- Children behave well in Reception. Expectations are high. This is also apparent at playtime and lunchtime, when older pupils act as good role models for younger children.
- Parents expressed very positive views about the care and support their children receive in the Reception Year. One parent said she was 'amazed' by the progress her daughter had recently made in her reading and writing. Parents also said communication was good and induction procedures useful.

School details

Unique reference number	114553
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10000830

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lorna Simm
Headteacher	Emma Maltby
Telephone number	01892 770 2211
Website	www.hartfieldschool.co.uk
Email address	office@st-maryhartfield.e-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 July 2014

Information about this school

- St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School is much smaller than the average primary school.
- The headteacher took up her substantive position in November 2015 after a short period of time as acting headteacher. She is currently supported by a national leader of education, who is the headteacher of Newick Church of England Primary School.
- There have been many changes in teaching and support staff, including at leadership level, since the last inspection.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, additional government funding, is very low.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the requirements for the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector conducted a learning walk accompanied by the headteacher on each day of the inspection, during which he visited all classrooms and year groups. During classroom visits he talked to pupils and assessed the quality of their work.
- Meetings were held with pupils, parents, the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, and the chair of governors accompanied by three other governors.
- The inspector held telephone conversations with representatives of the local authority and diocesan board.
- The inspector looked at a range of pupils' work, heard pupils read and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- The inspector considered the views of parents, taking into account 47 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View. The inspector also considered 21 free text responses submitted by parents and an email sent by one parent.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including those relating to safeguarding, attendance, minutes of meetings of the governing body, information about pupils' outcomes provided by the school, the school's self-evaluation of its own performance and the school's improvement planning.
- Records of monitoring visits and support provided by the local authority were also examined.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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