

St Mary's Bluecoat CofE (VA) Primary School

Lodge Lane, The Grove, Bridgnorth, WV15 5EQ

Inspection dates 18–19 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although now improving, pupils' achievement requires further improvement because standards in English and mathematics are not as high as they should be.
- Teachers do not show a strong understanding of how to use questions and discussion to challenge pupils so that they learn effectively and rapidly.
- Pupils are not confident or given enough opportunity to take the next steps in learning by trying things out for themselves.
- Pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills are not strong enough to enable their learning to move forward quickly enough.
- Too many pupils do not enjoy reading, and they do not read enough to make sure they become competent readers.
- Too many changes in staffing in the past have limited the impact of performance targets to improve teaching and so ensure rapid progress for pupils.
- Changes in staffing have also limited the development of leadership skills of teachers in charge of areas of the school's work.
- The learning environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not developed well enough to support good progress across all the areas of children's learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting executive headteacher, head of school and federation governors have made a swift start at improving the school. They have a thorough understanding of what needs doing and have detailed plans to achieve improvement.
- The federation with Worfield Primary School provides many opportunities for St Mary's staff to improve their teaching.
- Through effective support, pupils with special educational needs and those supported through pupil premium funding make good progress.
- When teaching is interesting and captures pupils' enthusiasm, they behave well.
- Pupils are well cared for. They feel very safe in school.
- Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development supports their positive attitudes to school and each other.
- A good start has been made on introducing the new curriculum and ways of assessing pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- In view of the high number of teachers new to the school and the reorganisation of classes, the inspector saw all teachers teach. All observations were carried out jointly with the acting executive headteacher or the acting head of school to assess their ability to check on the impact of teaching on learning.
- The inspector heard pupils read and looked at the work in pupils' books.
- Meetings were held with governors, senior leaders and pupils. A meeting was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's own judgements on its strengths and weaknesses, and the data it collects on pupils' progress. A scrutiny of work in pupils' books from across the school was conducted, including their current class work. Documents detailing the school's arrangements for safeguarding were reviewed.
- Questionnaire responses from 17 members of staff were analysed.
- The inspector took account of the 17 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

David Speakman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. A below-average proportion speak English as an additional language.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are disadvantaged and eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority).
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to that found in other schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Pupils are taught in single-age classes in Key Stage 1, but in one of two mixed-age classes in Key Stage 2 comprising a class for pupils in Years 3 and 4, and a class for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils.
- There has been a high level of staff turnover in recent times. The headteacher is currently out of school and there is acting leadership at a senior level. Three teachers in Key Stage 1 are new and, due to lower pupil numbers, Key Stage 2 has been reorganised into two classes. The governing body is newly formed.
- St Mary's Bluecoat School is in a federation with Worfield Endowed CofE Primary School. This is a school judged by Ofsted to be good at its last two inspections. The headteacher from Worfield is acting executive headteacher in the absence of St Mary's headteacher, and the deputy headteacher is acting head of school. Both schools have the same governing body.
- The acting executive headteacher is a local leader of education (LLE) and through the local authority she has provided support for the school in the absence of the substantive headteacher.
- An independent pre-school shares the school site. It is not run by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection. Numbers in the school nursery are typically small, and most children join the school at the beginning of the Reception Year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by:
 - giving teachers the opportunity to observe other staff within the federation to improve their understanding of what makes teaching good or outstanding
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do and planning challenging work for pupils at all ability levels
 - ensuring that teachers' questions and dialogue with pupils help move learning on quickly.
- Improve pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - increasing pupils' confidence to try things out for themselves and learn from their mistakes
 - improving standards in grammar, punctuation and spelling, and making sure pupils consistently apply these skills to produce better quality writing in all subjects
 - strengthening pupils' basic skills and knowledge in calculation and measure so they become more confident and skilled at solving problems in mathematics
 - improving pupils' confidence, skills and attitudes to reading so they become more competent and self-motivated.
- Improve the environment and resources in the Early Years Foundation Stage to improve children's learning and their achievement.
- Extend the setting of performance targets for all staff, and involve them in planning their own training in order to increase their effectiveness in both teaching and leadership roles.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school's leaders have not yet made sure that the quality of teaching is strong enough to promote good achievement. In a very short time, the acting executive headteacher and acting head of school have made a good start in bringing about improvement, but because of past weaknesses in teaching and pupils' achievement, there is still a lot to do to make sure that all pupils do as well as they can.
- Due to a high level of staff turnover, the school has experienced difficulty in making the checking of teaching and the setting of targets to improve teachers' performance effective. Due to recent actions, teaching is now better, but still requires improvement. Additionally, some staff such as teaching assistants were not included in the performance management process and therefore full checks were not made on their effectiveness. The new senior leaders and the new governing body are making a start on implementing the effective procedures already used at Worfield.
- Changes in staffing have hampered the development of leadership. There are subject leaders and staff responsible for other important areas of the school's work, but these roles are not developed sufficiently to ensure pupils achieve well. The federation is providing opportunities for staff to work closely with skilled leaders from Worfield in order to improve the quality of their leadership.
- The school has made arrangements for spending the primary sports funding to improve and widen its sporting provision. It is directed to engaging all pupils from across the school in sporting and outdoor adventurous activities, providing more opportunities for pupils to play games at after-school clubs, and increasing teachers' skills and confidence in teaching physical education. The school has not evaluated the impact of this spending.
- In collaboration with its partner school, St Mary's has made good preparations for the implementation of a new curriculum. They are well placed to check pupils' progress through implementing an assessment system that effectively records pupils' progress.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in lessons and at other times of the school day. Pupils take on responsibility well, in roles such as school council members or house captains to develop their social skills. They learn about democratic processes to help prepare them for later life through the election of these posts of responsibility and giving all pupils a voice through the school council representatives. Good social and moral development is shown in the way pupils of different backgrounds get on well and by their good behaviour. Although most pupils are White British, they are prepared well for life in multicultural Britain through developing their understanding of lifestyles, customs and cultures that are different from their own. They develop a sense of fairness by taking part in different out-of-school sporting competitions.
- The school pays good attention to equality issues. Spending of funds to support disadvantaged pupils enables all pupils whose circumstances make it difficult for them to join in additional activities to participate in the full range of additional activities offered by the school. There is no gender discrimination, and staff talk enthusiastically about the skills of the girls' football team.
- The support provided by the local authority is good and has been an important factor in guiding school improvement. The local authority has been aware for some time that the school was facing difficulty and was vulnerable. The local authority arranged for leaders in education to support the school. The diocese has also helped by joining forces with the local authority to support the creation of a federation with an effective Church of England primary school. The partnership is already having a positive impact on St Mary's. The school and the governing body have acted conscientiously on the advice given and this has supported the school's current improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is newly formed but already it is having a positive impact on the quality of education provided at St Mary's. Governors have improved their work in the school in recent months, and through collaboration with the local authority, the diocese and working with new federation

- governors they have developed their impact further.
- The governing body has already audited their skills and has conducted an initial review to ensure governors have updated training in order to deepen their understanding of their role and ensure their effectiveness.
 - Governors are already regular visitors to the school and find things out for themselves. They are developing a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have a realistic view of the school's effectiveness and what needs to be done. The whole governing body is fully supportive of the work of the current senior leaders.
 - Governors are skilled in understanding assessment and school performance data. They understand how pupils' achievement compares against other schools.
 - Governors are now beginning to set clear targets in managing the performance of the headteacher and staff. They link teachers' pay increases to the progress of their pupils.
 - The governing body makes sure that all statutory requirements are met, including for safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Behaviour is not good because pupils have not yet developed the confidence to take risks and move on to the next steps in learning without the support of an adult. This holds back pupils' learning, so they do not progress as well as they could.
- Occasionally, when lessons get boring and the work is too easy, pupils get unsettled, lose focus and their behaviour deteriorates. On these occasions, behaviour has a negative impact on learning. It is occasionally disruptive to others in the class, but more often, pupils disengage and sit quietly, doing little. When lessons are interesting and engage their interest, pupils are very keen to learn.
- Pupils say behaviour, both in lessons and at other times, is good. Since the new behaviour management systems have been introduced pupils recognise that good behaviour and achievement will be recognised and rewarded. They really value moving into the 'good' zones in their class charts and try hard to avoid moving into the 'poorer' zones. They say that the new curriculum is more interesting and they are now more interested in their work and try hard.
- Pupils say that there is no longer any bullying in school. There are differences, particularly amongst boys playing football, but these are 'easily sorted'. Staff at all levels go out of their way to ensure that pupils respect diversity and each other's differences. Pupils say there is very little 'name calling' and their actions show they regard others' feelings highly. During the inspection, behaviour observed in school assemblies, around school and at break times was good.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying and know what to do if they ever need help. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe while using the internet.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe at school and feel secure because senior leaders have already stressed the importance of safeguarding and put pupils' safety as a high priority. Safety arrangements are thorough and pupils are well supervised at all times. Entry to the school is very securely managed and full checks are made on all adults coming into contact with pupils.
- Vulnerable pupils are cared for well. Child protection processes are fully effective. Training for staff and governors is up-to-date and senior staff are experienced and highly skilled in implementing child protection procedures at all levels. Senior leaders show high levels of concern that pupils are kept safe in and out of school, and act decisively to ensure their safety.
- The response to the online questionnaire, Parent View, was small. There are mixed views, but some of these reflect the past turbulence in staffing. Staff questionnaires are more up-to-date and their views on pupils' safety and happiness in school are very positive. Pupils agree with these views.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not enabled pupils to achieve well. Differences in its impact from class to class means that pupils' progress has not been consistently good as they move through the school.
- Teachers do not show that they have a clear enough picture of how teaching helps all pupils learn rapidly. Expectations of what the most-able pupils are capable of doing are not high enough to ensure that these pupils achieve well. Occasionally, teachers do not take sufficient account of pupils' previous learning and work is pitched at a level that does not match their capabilities. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson some tasks were too easy to challenge and engage more-able pupils.
- Teachers sometimes take it for granted that pupils have secure basic skills in language and numeracy and plan accordingly. A few older pupils experienced some difficulty when completing their work in mathematics because their skills in performing calculation and their knowledge about standard units for measuring length were not secure.
- Sometimes pupils are confused by questions asked by teachers that are ambiguous and explanations that are not clear enough. Very occasionally, statements of what pupils are expected to learn in lessons are unnecessarily complicated because they have not been presented in language pupils understand. On these occasions, pupils are not clear about what they are expected to learn.
- The teaching of reading has not previously helped younger, poor readers to progress well. These pupils in Key Stage 1 have weak knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) and find reading hard. Teaching of reading in the past has not helped pupils to enjoy reading. Teachers are now working effectively to overcome past negative attitudes by promoting reading for pleasure. However, there is some way to go as some say they do not like reading because they find difficulty and never read at home.
- Additional adults who help teachers in the classroom are generally used well to support learning in lessons. They support pupils well in small groups and help targeted pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils or those with special educational needs, to make good progress.
- Where learning is more effective, pupils move on quickly because teachers demand more from them and ask questions that make them think hard and work things out for themselves. Teachers have good quality dialogue with pupils, which takes account of their ideas and preferences. Exciting activities, such as Year 1 mapping the school, really interested pupils and they fully engaged.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Changes in teaching staff since the school was last inspected have led to differences in pupils' progress and attainment from year to year. Data for the most recent school year show higher attainment and improved progress. However, achievement is not yet good in all year groups.
- In 2013, attainment at the end of Year 2 was below average in reading but broadly average in writing and mathematics. In Year 6, it was below average in mathematics and broadly average in reading and writing.
- During the last school year, pupils made better progress and standards improved. Progress was greater than nationally expected in Key Stage 1, but was not consistently good across the two year groups. The school's tracking data show exceptional progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 1 but progress that was slower in Year 2. In Key Stage 2, progress was in line with that nationally expected in reading, writing and mathematics. However, there was a difference in the progress made in different years, with best progress in Years 3 and 6.
- The progress of the most able pupils requires improvement. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher level at the end of Key Stage 1 improved in 2014. It was average in reading and mathematics but below in writing. In Key Stage 2, the proportion achieving the higher level 5 was average in reading, but below in other subjects. In both 2013 and 2014, no pupils achieved the very highest level 6.

- Assessment information for 2013 showed a difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding achieved better than other groups. Pupils who had started Key Stage 2 with lower levels of attainment did better than those who had started with higher attainment.
- Pupils did well in the Year 1 phonics screening check, with an above-average proportion achieving the expected standard. The good outcomes were reflected in same group doing well in reading assessments at the end of Year 2. However, pupils currently in Year 2 who did not meet the expected standard in last year's screening have not made enough progress in improving their reading skills. They read hesitantly and misread too many words. They say they find reading hard and do not enjoy it. Even older pupils find difficulty in settling into a book when reading for pleasure and few read at home.
- Through effective and well-targeted support, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, especially those supported at school action plus, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Despite making better progress in 2013 than others, disadvantaged pupils did not manage to completely close the attainment gaps in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because they started well behind other pupils. At the end of Key Stage 2, disadvantaged pupils were about four terms behind pupils nationally in reading, three terms behind in writing and two terms behind in mathematics. Compared to other pupils in the school, disadvantaged pupils were about two terms behind in reading and writing, but only half a term behind in mathematics.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Children enter Reception with skills and knowledge typical for their age. By the end of the Reception Year, their attainment is broadly average. It is above average in personal, social and emotional development and in communication skills. However, in reading, writing and mathematics most either reach the expected levels, or are approaching them. Achievement requires improvement.
- Adults give children opportunities to learn through investigation and exploring, but these are limited due to the lack of learning resources. Additionally, the indoor and outside areas are not resourced well enough or organised into learning zones reflecting the areas of learning to stimulate children's enquiry and support effective learning. For example, there is limited climbing equipment outside, computers are not readily available indoors and there are too few resources readily available with which children can experience books or start to count.
- During times when children choose their own activities, there is limited purposeful interaction between adults and children. Although adults do talk with children, they do not extend learning, for example through asking searching questions and encouraging curiosity.
- During adult-led activity, learning is better. In phonics (letters and the sounds they make) lessons, children are organised into groups by ability and work is matched well to their stage of development. During the inspection, children, including the more-able, did well in developing their early reading and writing skills in these sessions.
- Children behave well in Nursery and Reception. They get on well with each other and work purposefully in small groups. They quickly respond to adults' requests, for example to come together as a group. They listen politely to adults and to each other. Adults are vigilant in regard to safety; children are safe and secure during all activities.

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	123536
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	442555

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Edgar Hastings
Headteacher	Claire Gaskin (Acting Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2012
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