

St Mary's Bluecoat CofE (VA) Primary School

Lodge Lane, The Grove, Bridgnorth, Shropshire WV15 5EQ

Inspection dates

6–7 December 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

- Since joining the Trinity Federation, the new executive headteacher, senior leaders, governors and staff have driven forward improvements with determination.
- Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 has risen since the previous inspection. Most pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. Progress in the wider range of subjects is improving.
- Teaching is good across the school. This results in strong progress in lessons for current pupils over time, in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils say that teachers provide clear explanations and feedback which help them improve their work, and that they often give them harder work if they are ready for it.
- Children in the early years make good progress. Teachers provide rich opportunities for children to explore objects and events around them. This builds the children's confidence and social skills, and their ability to speak, read and write effectively.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and recognise the good-quality care their children receive to help them become confident individuals.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with prompt and carefully organised support, which staff are well trained to deliver. This develops their learning well.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Pupils are courteous to each other and to the adults who help them learn and develop. Disruptive behaviour of any form is rare. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of how to keep themselves safe.
- Senior leaders have made good use of the shared expertise within the Trinity Federation. Improved staff training and a clearer understanding of responsibilities have helped improve learning for all groups of pupils. The small number of disadvantaged pupils now mostly achieve as well as other pupils nationally.
- Learning in topic work, in subjects such as history and geography, is not checked rigorously enough to ensure that the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have the opportunity to tackle work that reflects their depth of knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils' basic skills develop well in core subjects. However, leaders recognise that this is less successful in the wider curriculum.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rigour in checking up on how well pupils are doing in topic work across subjects, so that work is always challenging for the most able pupils.
- Ensure that the development of the wider curriculum continues, so that pupils' basic skills are promoted in the full range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since her appointment, the executive headteacher has been relentless in her drive to improve the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make. The school has a clear direction and plan to continue the recent improvements. Following some staffing changes, the executive headteacher has created an effective and dedicated leadership team and generated a palpable team spirit and 'can do' attitude among staff.
- The executive headteacher and her senior team tackled weaknesses in teaching straight away, setting up robust systems to evaluate and improve it. The quality of teaching is checked rigorously and involves subject leaders as well as senior staff. Teaching staff are set challenging targets, including ones to improve pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers and teaching assistants are committed to continually improving their practice.
- The school makes good use of training from the Trinity Federation, as well as from colleagues within the school. For example, there has been effective training to eliminate weaker aspects of teaching, to improve leadership skills and to meet the needs of the school development plan. Teaching assistants are becoming highly skilled in supporting identified groups of pupils. Consequently, the quality of teaching and the rate of pupils' progress have improved.
- The school has made good progress against the recommendations for improvement identified in the previous inspection. For example, in the recently extended and modernised early years area, children now have greater opportunities to explore and learn for themselves in a much more exciting and challenging learning environment.
- Leaders manage staff performance well and identify where staff have made a positive difference to pupils. However, where a teacher's work has significant weaknesses, even after support, leaders do not hesitate to take stronger action.
- Leaders ensure that teachers always adhere to the school's marking policy and the school works closely with other schools in the federation to verify the accuracy of teachers' assessments.
- The school promotes equal opportunities for all pupils. Leaders specifically check how well different groups of pupils are learning, such as the most able disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders check that all pupils have equal access to the school's resources, and check that no group's achievement falls behind that of others. Teachers identify early those children who need extra help to make strong progress from their starting points, and provide well-planned support. Differences between how well groups of pupils learn are small in most year groups and increasingly diminishing.
- The extra funding for disadvantaged pupils is used well. Additional staffing is used to support pupils within class when differences in learning have been identified. Consequently, these pupils, including the majority of the most able pupils, are making good progress over time.
- The physical education and sports premium funding is used well to provide staff training and time for leaders to support and train colleagues. It is having a positive

impact on pupils' health, fitness and level of skill.

- The school actively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Relationships between staff and pupils are caring and pupils behave well, being considerate and respectful of others. Pupils regularly reflect on honesty, forgiveness and resolving problems without conflict. They learn about world religions and different cultures, as well as fundamental British values. The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils respect and welcome diversity within their own and the wider community.
- The local authority is fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and has worked well with senior leaders to improve the school since the previous inspection.
- The Parent View responses indicate that parents have a very positive view of the school, with all of those who responded saying they would recommend the school to another parent.
- The school's core curriculum enables pupils to develop basic skills well. Books show that teachers give pupils clear guidance to improve their work. 'Next steps' for the pupils and further challenges ensure the good progress of all groups. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that the wider curriculum requires further review to ensure that pupils have greater opportunities to use their English and mathematical knowledge in a wide range of subjects.
- Leaders are continually monitoring how well pupils are doing, including in their topic work. They have correctly identified that the most able pupils do not always demonstrate their depth of knowledge and understanding enough in their topic work.

Governance of the school

- Governance in the school is effective.
- Governors ask challenging questions of school leaders and use their link governor structure well to monitor particular aspects of the school's work. They have a clear understanding of how teachers' performance is managed and how teachers are held to account for the outcomes of pupils in their classes. They manage the finance and resources that are available to the school, including the pupil premium funding, very well, measuring the impact of spending on pupils' achievement.
- Governors carry out a wide range of regular monitoring and evaluation activities and contribute to ongoing school improvement planning. They meet with school leaders to review progress. They have an extremely good understanding of the assessment information that is available to them and use this to track the progress of all groups of pupils. They also have a clear understanding of the effectiveness of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Keeping pupils safe has a high priority in the school. Being vigilant about pupils' welfare is a central part of the school's culture. All staff are well trained, including in

the 'Prevent' duty, and school leaders provide regular updates on safeguarding matters. Staff are well aware of the procedures to follow to raise any concerns they may have.

- The designated safeguarding leaders are experienced and resolute in their roles. They know their contacts in the local authority's social services well and are tenacious in ensuring that their concerns about particular children are followed up promptly.
- Several leaders and governors are trained in safer recruitment and staff are appropriately checked before being employed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has benefited from sharing other schools' expertise within the Trinity Federation. Teachers have higher expectations of pupils and the quality of teaching and learning has improved.
- Teachers have established good relationships with pupils. They manage their groups efficiently and provide interesting activities that engage pupils well. Classrooms are calm and friendly places. Teachers often use effective questioning to make pupils reflect on their understanding and explain their answers. Pupils are given regular opportunities to think about what they have learned.
- Teaching assistants are skilful in their roles and they support identified pupils well. They play an important role in teaching pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. Teaching assistants receive regular and ongoing training. Much of the extra support is provided in one-to-one teaching or small-group work and is effective in improving pupils' progress and raising their confidence and self-esteem.
- Teachers adhere to the school's assessment policy. Pupils understand the marking system and say that teachers' comments and questions are helpful. They are given opportunities to go over the marking comments and, on most occasions, make the necessary changes or try to answer the questions posed.
- The teaching of literacy, especially reading, is a particular strength. Pupils are encouraged to read daily during morning registration and the school library provides an attractive reading area that pupils use at playtime and lunchtime. Phonics is taught well so that pupils improve their reading and spelling quickly.
- Teachers explain clearly what pupils are to learn, often through the use of well-chosen demonstrations. For example, in a mathematics lesson for Year 2, some pupils were chosen to show the rest of the class how to correctly set out arrays.
- Expectations for the most able, including those who are disadvantaged, are high in most lessons. For example, in a mixed Years 4 and 5 class, most-able pupils worked on extension tasks, calculating increasingly complicated angles. Occasionally, these pupils could be challenged to write in greater depth when completing topic work.
- Teaching of English and mathematics is good. Work in books shows that pupils are making good progress from their individual starting points across the school. School leaders recognise that teaching in the wider curriculum does not yet give pupils

sufficient opportunities to apply basic skills and deepen their understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Children in the early years show great confidence when working or playing with their classmates. Pupils' confidence is also apparent in later years, for example when they speak fluently when answering questions in class or discussing their ideas. Pupils are quite willing to explain their work or their thinking. Their attitudes to learning help them to make good progress.
- Pupils are polite and respectful. They know the appropriate way to speak to adults and can sustain conversations about their views on the school. Pupils insisted they would respect anyone with a different background. They collaborate well when working in groups.
- Pupils willingly take on extra responsibilities, for example as play leaders, door monitors and reading mentors. Year 6 play leaders and reading mentors take their roles seriously and enjoy helping younger pupils.
- Pupils say they are happy in school and feel safe. They explain that they have someone that they can talk to if they ever have concerns. They have learned how to stay safe outside school, including when using the internet. They know about the different forms of bullying and stated that bullying incidents were rare. They were confident that teachers would sort out any disputes fairly.
- All areas of the school where pupils are working or playing are well supervised and the site is securely fenced. Visitors are appropriately checked and the parents spoken to agreed their children were kept safe at school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff have high expectations of behaviour. Pupils know how they are expected to behave and understand the school's system of rewards and sanctions. They conduct themselves well in lessons and when moving around the school.
- The school has implemented a more stringent system for parents to apply for authorised absence and to ensure that pupils attend school whenever possible. Leaders have been successful in encouraging parents to understand that regular attendance is essential. Attendance was below average in recent years, but has improved this year for all groups of pupils and is currently just above average.
- Pupils reported that they get along with each other well and that misbehaviour in class is rare, though it occasionally happens. The school records all incidents of misbehaviour clearly, including the impact of the school's response. There have been few incidents of serious misbehaviour. Occasionally, pupils lose interest in activities or teacher

explanations and start to fidget, so learning slows.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' outcomes have improved since the last inspection. Evidence from the inspection and the school's own assessment information show that pupils currently on roll make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Some pupils are making rapid progress and, as a result, across the school, the proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding the expected levels of attainment are rising.
- Because the school has small numbers of pupils in each year group, results can fluctuate year on year. Provisional results for 2016 indicate that Year 6 pupils left the school with standards above age-related expectations in reading and writing and close to this in mathematics. Progress in reading, writing and mathematics was close to the national average. Pupils are well prepared for secondary education when they leave the school.
- Pupils' attainment in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2016 was above the national average. Pupils' understanding of phonics lays good foundations for the development of their reading skills. Consequently, pupils enjoy reading, read frequently and are confident and fluent.
- Standards have risen in key stage 1 and are now close to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The impact of pupil premium funding for the small number of disadvantaged pupils is positive. These pupils make good progress. Differences in attainment are evident initially in the younger children but have largely diminished by the time these pupils leave Year 6.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do well in reading, writing and mathematics. Across the school, every one of these pupils has made at least the expected progress and many have exceeded this expectation. While the most able do well in topic work, in subjects such as history and geography, over time, there are occasions when they do not produce work of sufficient depth in their topic books.
- The specific needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well in school. Activities are well planned and help pupils to fully access their learning. Support also includes one-to-one support from well-trained teaching assistants. As a result, these pupils make good progress as they move through the school.
- Girls performed less well than boys in the tests at the end of Year 6 for 2016. However, books show that boys and girls who are currently in the school are making similar progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's own information about the progress pupils are making confirms this.

Early years provision

Good

- The small number of children who join the Nursery class have skills and levels of development that are broadly typical for their age in all areas. By the end of the Reception Year, they have made good progress and are ready for the demands of Year 1. Children settle quickly into the school's ways of working. Children are continually encouraged to use their indoor and outdoor learning areas well, to explore the world around them.
- Children learn classroom routines quickly. They develop self-confidence in the newly refurbished safe and secure environment of the early years, and they learn how to do things for themselves. Children cooperated well with one another, for example when decorating an outdoor Christmas tree, and some tidied up the room with little prompting from adults.
- Teaching and assessment are good. Adults model skills and expected behaviour clearly. They maintain a calm approach and do not raise their voices. They manage children's behaviour well. Staff take every opportunity to engage children in conversation and to ask questions that challenge them to think hard. The outcomes of such interactions are recorded and used to plan activities for the next steps in children's learning. Learning journals (examples of children's work) show clearly the good progress children are making. The school is encouraging parents to contribute more to this record.
- The indoor area is organised to include activities linked to the theme introduced by adult-led sessions and to develop skills that are less strong. The display is colourful, with a good focus on literacy and numeracy, and celebrates children's work well. The outdoor classroom has been improved and is an exciting space for children, with a good range of experiences on offer in all areas of learning. Children often choose activities outdoors, even in inclement weather. The school is justifiably proud of their recently extended and refurbished early years area.
- Children behave very well and also cooperate well with each other. They know how to take turns and listen to what each other is saying.
- Arrangements for keeping children safe are highly effective because teachers and teaching assistants are extremely conscientious in monitoring at all times to ensure that children are kept safe.

School details

Unique reference number	123536
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10020021

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Edgar Hastings
Executive Headteacher	Claire Gaskin
Telephone number	01746 763455
Website	www.stmarysbc.co.uk
Email address	admin@stmarysbc.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 September 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below that found in most schools. After White British heritage, the next sizeable ethnic group is Chinese.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average compared to schools nationally.
- The vast majority of staff have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- Numbers in the school nursery are small and children attend mornings only.
- Pupils are taught in a range of single- and mixed-age classes throughout the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in six lessons or parts of lessons. All lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspector looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read. He met pupils to gain their views of the school. The inspector observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime and at the end of the school day, as well as in lessons.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation including assessments and records of pupils' progress, the school's checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection and attendance, records of how teaching is managed and the school improvement plans.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the director of teaching and learning, the federation special educational needs coordinator and middle leaders. The inspector met governors including the chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 21 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and talked to parents at the beginning of the school day. He also looked at the nine responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the online pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Steven Cartlidge, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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