

St Mary's Church of England Academy

Trinity Avenue, Mildenhall, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP28 7LR

Inspection dates

8–9 June 2017

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

- Leaders and governors are knowledgeable and passionate about what they do. They are ambitious for the future of the school and have high expectations of all staff.
- The principal is well respected by staff, pupils and the wider community. His capable leadership, effectively supported by the deputy headteacher, has ensured that outcomes have improved since the previous inspection.
- The governing body is highly skilled. They use information well to challenge leaders to ensure that the school's work is accurate and effective.
- Leaders have appropriate plans for further improvement. They make thorough and accurate checks on how well pupils are learning. This contributes to rising standards across the school.
- Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are improving across the school. However, those in writing, although improved, still lag behind those in reading and mathematics. The school has identified appropriate actions to ensure that improvements are sustained.
- The school makes prudent use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils make good progress in lessons and over time.
- Leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching and are aware where there are inconsistencies. They have high expectations and provide effective support and training opportunities where this is required.
- Consequently, teaching has improved since the last inspection and almost all teaching is good or better, despite the many changes in teaching staff.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and typically behave very well in lessons and around school. They are confident, polite, well-mannered and respectful. In a few lessons, when work is not well matched to their learning needs, their attention can slip.
- The school provides for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Learning about the benefits of a 'growth mindset' helps pupils to develop resilience.
- The stimulating curriculum and Christian values which underpin all aspects of school life promote fundamental British values effectively.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start. The early years leader is aware that some staff need further training to ensure that they move children's learning on as effectively as possible.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and thereby outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics to consistently good, by making sure that:
 - plans to further strengthen new approaches to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics are fully implemented, so that the improvements already seen are built upon and sustained
 - teachers, especially those who are new to the school, continue to benefit from high-quality training and opportunities to learn from other teachers, both within and outside the school
 - all adults in the early years have appropriate training to ensure that their interactions with children have the maximum impact in moving learning on
 - teachers' planning ensures that lessons are well matched to all pupils' learning needs, in order to engage them and challenge them appropriately.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school. Since his appointment, the principal, together with his deputy and other senior leaders, has worked effectively to improve the school. Their determination, and capable and committed leadership, are ensuring that outcomes for pupils are improving rapidly.
- Subject leaders are knowledgeable, passionate and highly capable at leading their subject areas. Improving standards in English and mathematics has rightly been a focus for the school. Science and art are also a strength and pupils' work in a range of subjects is of a good quality.
- Leaders have evaluated the school thoroughly. They have an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. They are keen to secure further improvement and are taking the right actions to bring this about.
- New approaches to the teaching of mathematics, which was identified as an area for improvement in the previous inspection, have had a very positive impact, as evidenced by outcomes in the key stage 2 tests in 2016. This year, the school has focused on improving the teaching of writing. Leaders were disappointed with outcomes at the end of key stage 1 last year and have taken effective action to address this.
- The management of teachers' performance ensures that all staff have robust and ambitious targets. Senior leaders are not afraid to hold teachers to account for their performance. Staff value the professional development that is provided and this has made an important difference to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to support these pupils. Detailed analysis of individual needs means that barriers to pupils' learning are identified and support is tailored to them. This includes teaching assistants, a specialist language teacher, and a family support worker. Pupils also have access to 'art nurture' and attend after-school clubs. The most able disadvantaged pupils receive support through the 'Tomorrow's Achievers' charity. The governing body monitors how leaders use the funding and align this with the progress of disadvantaged pupils, to check that funding is having the desired impact.
- Leaders use the physical education and sports funding well. It supports staff to develop their skills in teaching a range of forms of physical education and provides more opportunities for pupils to participate in competitive sport. This year the school has reached county finals in hockey, table tennis and football. A sports coach is also funded from the academy budget.
- The curriculum is effective in stimulating good learning. Interesting topics inspire pupils to write. For example, pupils in Year 4 were writing about the rainforest. During the inspection, science week was taking place and all pupils were highly engaged in a range of scientific activities. Pupils in Year 5 investigated the ingredients that made the best bubble mixture. Year 3 pupils were enthralled when their teacher poured water on dry ice to simulate the atmosphere on Mars, providing an excellent stimulus for their

writing.

- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is led well. Additional funding is used effectively to meet the needs of individual pupils, whose progress is monitored carefully. As a result, this group make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Deliberate and effective action is taken to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is a strength of the school. The school's Christian ethos and values underpin all aspects of school life. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to be reflective and thoughtful about a range of topics. During celebration assembly, pupils showed respect, ambition and perseverance when celebrating achievements linked to learning, sport and personal development. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is highly effective. Governors have high aspirations for pupils and staff at the school.
- Governors are well trained and bring a range of professional skills, which they put to good use. Individual governors lead aspects of the school's work very well, for example in relation to standards.
- The governing body has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for further development. They provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge to senior leaders to bring about improvements and hold them to account for the progress pupils make.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have ensured that all staff have received up-to-date training in all aspects of child protection, including the government's 'Prevent' duty. As a result, staff are very aware of their responsibilities and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being.
- The school's single central record of pre-employment checks meets all statutory requirements. The site is secure and visitors' entry and exit to the school is appropriately regulated, with effective signing in and out procedures.
- The designated safeguarding leads are well trained and have a good understanding of their role. The headteacher is a 'train the trainer' for internet safety, safeguarding and school safety. He has delivered recent workshops for parents on internet safety. The school website also provides a range of information and advice to parents on how to keep their children safe.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe online and when using social media. There are frequent reminders about keeping safe both in lessons and around the school. Pupils who were spoken to by inspectors said they felt safe in school and the large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that this is the case.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Almost all teaching is good, with many strengths. Relationships with pupils are warm and these foster pupils' positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils collaborate well when working in pairs and groups. They take pride in their work, which is mainly well presented. This is evident in high-quality displays in classrooms and around the school and work in pupils' books.
- Classrooms are bright and colourful and provide a strong reference for learning. Displays and 'learning walls' model processes effectively and provide good prompts, support and resources for learning.
- Teachers' questioning skills are strong. They use their good subject knowledge and accurate assessment of pupils' learning to pose well-pitched questions, which offer an equal measure of challenge and support. In an upper key stage 2 mathematics lesson, a teacher, through skilful questioning, supported pupils to apply their knowledge of angles to solve a problem related to science work about the eye. Pupils were given time to collaborate with their peers and explain their thinking. This enabled them to make rapid progress.
- The training that teachers have benefited from has improved the teaching of mathematics. Teachers plan learning to ensure that pupils secure strong number skills, as well as developing their problem-solving and reasoning skills.
- Writing opportunities are carefully planned. New approaches to teaching allow pupils time to rehearse their writing and apply their skills across the curriculum. Consequently, the quality of pupils' writing across the school is improving.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and deployed by teachers. They skilfully support at whole class, group and individual pupil level. Consequently, they make a positive contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for those who need additional support. They contribute well to the tailored support provided for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils make good progress in lessons and over time.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) is mostly effective and well organised. Those pupils who read to inspectors demonstrated a secure grasp of phonics knowledge. A minority of teachers do not enunciate letters and sounds consistently accurately when teaching phonics.
- The quality of pupils' work in science books shows they are making good progress and learning to develop a broad range of scientific skills. Pupils plan and carry out their own scientific investigations, predict outcomes and record their findings accurately. For example, Year 4 pupils designed insect hotels and tested these in various locations to see how many bugs would be collected in each location. They then collated their results and discussed whether these matched their predictions.
- Pupils benefit from specialist teachers for art, physical education and music, which enriches their learning. Art books show good-quality work and the study of a variety of artists linked to pupils' topic work.
- Although most teachers plan lessons which engage pupils and challenge them at exactly the right level, a minority do not do this consistently. When this happens and

pupils are less engaged in their learning, their attention lapses and consequently progress slips.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are polite and respectful. They are confident in speaking to adults and were keen to speak to inspectors about their school and their work. They enjoy the challenges that teachers give them in their learning.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunities they are given to take on responsibilities, such as the school council and the eco council. School council members were proud of their involvement in improving the outside area. The head boy and head girl in Year 6 set an example to the rest of the school, as do Year 6 in general, who stand out through wearing their distinctive black sweatshirts. Pupils in Year 5 form the worship team, whose role is to lead assemblies across the school.
- The curriculum includes teaching pupils to develop a 'Growth Mindset' approach. This contributes to their positive attitudes to learning. They are happy to make mistakes because they know that these help them to learn. Pupils understand that mistakes mean 'I can't do it yet.' The power of the word 'yet' is celebrated in collective worship and displays around the school.
- Pupils know how to stay safe in and out of school, including when using the internet and social media. Pupils confidently told inspectors about e-safety and were keen to share their understanding of firewalls and 'not to give strangers our details'. The school promotes e-safety on a regular basis. The school website hosts a range of information to support parents in all aspects of keeping their children safe.
- Vulnerable pupils and their families receive valuable support from a family support worker. She also runs a range of courses, including for young carers.
- Pupils are happy and feel safe in school. They say that there is little bullying but they are confident that when this does happen, an adult will sort it out. A very small number of parents expressed some concerns about bullying and the school's approach to dealing with this. Inspectors found that the school's records show clearly that any bullying allegations are dealt with swiftly. There are effective systems in place and detailed records are kept showing the actions taken on the rare occasions where bullying does occur.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Parents, staff and pupils have no concerns about behaviour or conduct day to day.
- The school is an orderly environment. Pupils behave well both in classrooms and when moving around the school, in assembly and at break and lunchtime. The Christian values of forgiveness, compassion and restoration underpin the behaviour policy. Pupils understand the school rules. There are lots of opportunities for rewards and celebration

of good behaviour, which pupils appreciate.

- Leaders record any incidents of poor behaviour and encourage pupils to reflect on the choices they have made.
- While most pupils behave well in lessons, a few occasionally become inattentive. These rare incidents generally result when an activity is insufficiently interesting or challenging.
- Attendance is improving and is now broadly average. Attendance rates and persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils had been an area of concern. However, this has improved as a result of leaders' work with individual families. The school does all it can to encourage regular attendance and uses external support to help pupils back in to school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school's own tracking system, supported by inspection evidence and work seen in books, shows that most pupils currently on roll are now making good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics and a range of other subjects. There is a slight legacy of underachievement in some year groups, due to historic inconsistencies in the quality of teaching that pupils have experienced. Senior leaders and governors are aware that this is the case and are doing all they can to ensure that these pupils catch up rapidly.
- Attainment in the key stage 2 tests in 2016 was above national levels in reading, writing and mathematics combined. For both reading and mathematics, attainment was above that seen nationally for both the expected and higher levels. Pupils' attainment in writing, however, was below the national equivalent at the expected level, with only a very small number of pupils reaching the higher standard.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics was well above average and among the highest in the country. This reflects the school's revised approach to teaching mathematics since the last inspection, which is having a significant impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding. Progress in reading was average, which also reflects improvement. Progress in writing for the 2016 cohort was significantly below average. However, careful analysis shows that the progress of some pupils who had previously had very low attainment impacted negatively on overall progress.
- In the key stage 1 tests in 2016, attainment at the expected level was below average in reading, writing and mathematics, although the proportions who achieved greater depth were higher than the national average. However, only half of these pupils had reached the expected good level of development at the end of the Reception Year. These pupils are currently in Year 3 and most are on track to reach end of year expectations. This means they are making good progress over time.
- This year, the school has rightly focused on improving writing. Work in pupils' books and internal tracking information show that standards in writing are improving rapidly as a result of the new strategies used to teach this. Pupils in all year groups have made good progress in writing since the start of the academic year.
- Leaders have taken action to strengthen teaching and learning in key stage 1. Tracking information, the results of 'mock' tests and work in pupils' books, indicate that

outcomes this year will show improvement and are likely to be at or above those expected nationally.

- In the early years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development showed improvement in 2016 and indications are that this improvement will continue this year.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has been below national figures in both 2015 and 2016. However, low numbers of these pupils had reached the expected good level of development at the end of the early years. By the end of Year 2, almost all pupils catch up and reach the standard.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good provision and their progress is closely monitored. As a result, they make good progress from their various starting points.
- Pupils' current work shows that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress. Evidence suggests that differences between these pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils are diminishing, because the pupil premium funding is being used effectively.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are provided with a range of opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding through well-planned activities. Consequently, most make good progress throughout the school.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision is led well. The leader has a clear and accurate understanding of its strengths and areas that need to be developed. Children in the Reception class benefit from a stimulating and well-resourced learning environment which is warm and welcoming.
- A high proportion of children typically enter the Reception Year with skills and abilities that are below those of other children nationally. They make good progress from their starting points, but the proportion who reach the expected good level of development has been below the national average in both 2015 and 2016.
- Leaders have taken steps to improve outcomes. High expectations of what children can achieve, together with increasingly effective assessment and tracking systems, and early interventions, are ensuring that more children are on track to meet the expected standard in 2017. At the time of the inspection, a high proportion of children had already met the expected standard and indications are that overall outcomes will be in line with those nationally.
- Children's work in their reading and writing books supports the school's view that more will meet the expected standard this year and be well prepared for Year 1. Children identified as at risk of not reaching the expected standard are assigned a key worker who is responsible for additional one-to-one daily learning sessions and liaising with parents.
- Teachers plan activities that excite and engage children, enabling them to learn well. For example, during the inspection, children were learning about life cycles. Watching chicks hatch gave them a real-life experience of this and stimulated their curiosity and interest. Children discussed what happened when they saw chicks coming out of an egg and went on to write sentences about this, for example, 'the chick is wet'. Children

also benefit from forest-based learning activities and from a variety of visits and visitors to enhance their learning experiences.

- Children behave well in the early years. They are attentive and enjoy learning together. Expectations and routines are well established. Children respond to adults' instructions and behave sensibly as they learn and explore.
- Leaders make sure that children are safe, both indoors and outside. Welfare arrangements in the early years are effective and children are well cared for. Staff hold the relevant qualifications to ensure that individual needs are met. The warm manner in which staff engage with children helps them to feel secure. They know how to keep themselves safe in a secure, well-organised environment.
- Effective communication with parents is established from the start. Parents appreciate the opportunities to 'stay and play' with their child. An online learning journey enables parents to contribute to documenting their child's learning.
- There are high numbers of adults and their use is well planned by the early years leader. Most adults are effective at ensuring that children's learning is maximised, whether they are initiating their own learning or engaged in adult-guided activities. However, not all are as effective as they could be in helping to stimulate and move children's learning on and, as a result, a few children do not get as much out of their learning experience as they could.

School details

Unique reference number	137419
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10031379

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Derek Kuziw
Principal	Mr Colin Haley
Telephone number	01638 713317
Website	www.smpsac.org/
Email address	colin.haley@smpsac.org
Date of previous inspection	8–9 July 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education's guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on the key stage 2 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016. It meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- There have been a high number of changes in teaching staff since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is lower than the national average.

- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than the national average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than is seen nationally.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of information to judge the quality of teaching over time. This included scrutiny of pupils' books and visits to all classrooms. A number of visits were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Individual pupils were heard reading and inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and conduct both in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors met with pupils to find out about their school experiences and spoke with them informally during play and lunchtimes.
- Discussions took place with parents when they were delivering their children to school. Inspectors also took account of 100 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 64 free-text comments.
- Meetings were held with four members of the governing body and members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors scrutinised all aspects of safeguarding and documentation relating to behaviour and bullying. They also looked in detail at the school's information about pupils' progress and school development plans and self-evaluations.

Inspection team

Joan Beale, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Joanna Pedlow	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Morley	Ofsted Inspector

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