

St Mary's Farnham Royal CofE Primary School

Church Road, Farnham Royal, Slough SL2 3AW

Inspection dates	18–19 November 2015
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

- Strong leadership and management, particularly from the headteacher, have greatly improved the quality of education and pupils' outcomes since the previous inspection.
- Leaders, including governors, have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and all staff work together determinedly to improve provision.
- Better tracking of pupils' progress has enabled teachers to make sure that they give them work at the right level of difficulty, and to identify and support any pupils who are in danger of falling behind.
- Pupils achieve well regardless of their abilities, including those from different ethnic heritages, disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Children in the early years get a very good start to their education. Teachers now provide them with a much better grounding in basic skills.
- Pupils greatly enjoy school and take pride in their learning. Their concentration and enjoyment of lessons are much better because teachers give them interesting activities that are challenging but manageable.
- Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour. They give pupils consistently clear feedback about their work, which helps them to improve.
- Pupils behave well and rightly feel safe in school. Strong provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means pupils' personal development is good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although teachers have worked hard to close gaps in pupils' knowledge, caused by weak progress in the past, remaining weaknesses still hamper the progress of older pupils, particularly in mathematics.
- Some pupils' handwriting is very untidy at times, and others fail to join their writing even by Year 6. This can reduce pupils' fluency in getting their ideas on paper, and detracts from the presentation of their work.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Work systematically as a school to identify and eliminate the remaining gaps in the knowledge and understanding of older pupils, particularly in mathematics.
- Improve pupils' presentation and fluency in handwriting by making sure that teachers:
 - insist that pupils routinely use a joined handwriting style as they get older, in line with school policy and the requirements of the National Curriculum
 - have the same high expectations of pupils' presentation as of their behaviour and progress
 - model a suitable joined style for pupils, in teachers' own handwriting and in appropriate displays.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leadership and management have improved considerably. This has had a major impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' consequent achievement. At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were not making enough impact and, for a time, the school relied too much on external support, or on the headteacher. The clear guidance and high expectations of the headteacher have created an increasingly effective group of senior leaders. Together with good teamwork from all staff, this has transformed the school.
- Leaders now check carefully on provision within their areas of responsibility and accurately identify strengths and weaknesses. Better use of assessments of pupils' progress, regular checks on the quality of pupils' work in their books, and visits to observe colleagues at work in class have all contributed to this. Leaders use the information well to help colleagues to improve their practice, and thereby to improve achievement.
- A pervasive culture of continually striving together to improve things for pupils characterises all that the school does. Although some leaders are too new to their roles for their work to have had a full impact on progress, they have already made a good start and are clear about what they want to achieve. Staff and pupils share high aspirations, which result in good progress and positive attitudes from all groups.
- The school has used the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. It has provided academic support to help these pupils make the same good progress as their classmates, as well as ensuring that eligible pupils are able to play a full part in school life. Better assessment systems have ensured that the school quickly responds to any issues that arise, with help tailored to individuals' needs to help them achieve. Staff have identified a dip in the progress of Year 3 pupils on transition from Key Stage 1, for example, and have put in robust measures to help them catch up, as well as taking preventative action to forestall a similar issue next year.
- Some shortcomings in pupils' knowledge and understanding from previous years still hamper their progress at times. Individual teachers work hard to address any such gaps in pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 4 class, the teacher successfully modified the plans for a lesson when she identified weaknesses in pupils' knowledge of two-dimensional shapes and the related vocabulary. The school is considering how to audit these gaps more comprehensively and so build in compensatory measures in a more systematic and organised way.
- Previous inconsistencies in the quality of teaching have been largely eliminated through clear feedback to colleagues about their practice, and extra advice and training, both within the school and from outside, to help them improve. This performance management system ensures that teachers have clear individual targets based on their effectiveness, for example in raising standards. Staff know that promotion or progression up the pay scales is dependent on success in meeting their targets.
- The curriculum gives pupils a wide variety of interesting experiences, which promote their achievement as well as their personal development and their positive attitudes to learning. It covers the new National Curriculum well by linking subjects together in a way that makes learning meaningful and interesting to pupils. Provision for pupils' social development is greatly enhanced by a scheme that is applied consistently across the school. Pupils are keen to reap the rewards and positive acknowledgements of their efforts, as well as respecting the sanctions that are applied to transgressions. A wide variety of trips and extra-curricular activities is greatly appreciated by pupils and enhances their learning as well as their enjoyment of school.
- The extra funding given to primary schools to promote sport has been effective. The variety of activities available to pupils has been increased, staff expertise enhanced and pupils' participation has grown, including in competitive sport.
- The school promotes British values well and pupils take a pride in their understanding of why it is important to follow the rule of law, and they enjoy learning about important traditions, such as Remembrance Day. They are respectful of others and their views, and value the diversity of their classmates, such as the different languages they are able to speak. They have a good understanding of democracy, for example, through the elections to the school council.
- Good provision is in place for pupils to use their basic literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Teachers have generated a major leap forward in pupils' literacy skills through more effective teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make). This is giving younger pupils a much more secure start to learning than was the case in the past. However, the school does not develop pupils' handwriting

systematically enough. It is often untidy, and teachers do not always ensure that all pupils use a joined style appropriately, particularly in the older classes.

- There are positive links with parents, who are given good information about the school and about how their children are getting on. Responses to the online questionnaire were extremely positive, with parents particularly valuing that their children are happy, feel safe and are well looked after.
- The local authority has provided good support. It has helped the school to increase its capacity to improve by helping the governing body to increase its effectiveness, and staff to strengthen their leaderships skills. It has also brokered links between Saint Mary's and other local schools so that they are able to share expertise and learn from each other.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governors have audited their skills and improved them through careful recruitment of new governors as well as by undertaking relevant training.
 - The governing body has greatly improved its effectiveness. It is better informed about the school, particularly the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. This enables governors to challenge the school and to hold it to account for its performance. They ensure that they link teachers' pay progression to successful performance. Governors have a good knowledge of safeguarding and take a full part, with staff, in making sure that arrangements meet requirements.
 - The governors ensure that money is spent effectively. They know the rationale behind the spending of different elements, such as the sport premium, and monitor their impact. For example, they know the impact of the pupil premium spending on progress, and how 'blips' in this are being addressed.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are properly trained, and the governing body has suitable knowledge and expertise to provide support and challenge. Documentation is detailed, thorough and up-to-date. Staff follow up any concerns carefully and record them securely. Leaders undertake suitable liaison with parents or with outside agencies as required, to ensure that pupils' safety is monitored and assured.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- Learning has improved considerably because teachers make better use of assessments to check how well pupils are doing. They then provide different groups with suitably challenging work that is neither too hard nor too easy. This engages pupils' interest and means that their progress has improved.
- Teachers are good at providing pupils with interesting activities, which support very positive attitudes to learning. Teachers explain things clearly and their enthusiastic presentation generates enthusiasm in pupils. A group in Year 6 agreed that they 'do work and learn things, but also have loads of fun'.
- Staff have successfully developed resilience in pupils when they are puzzled or if they make mistakes. Teachers give pupils clear feedback on their work and pupils said that getting comments about mistakes was good because 'they show you how to improve'.
- Teachers frequently give pupils good opportunities to discuss their work together, and help them structure these discussions so they are productive. This helps pupils to clarify their ideas, involves everyone in the work and helps develop speaking and listening skills well.
- The teaching of reading has greatly improved through a more structured approach to teaching phonics. In the younger classes, in particular, adults take opportunities to reinforce pupils' understanding of letters and sounds in other lessons. This is helping pupils to become independent, fluent writers.
- Teachers and other adults keep a careful check of how pupils are getting on during lessons, so they can help any who are puzzled in a timely fashion. They also challenge and question those who are successful to extend their thinking and refine their work. This monitoring also means that individual teachers can spot gaps in pupils' learning, and are able to plan how to tackle these.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. As a result, pupils get on sensibly in lessons, concentrate hard and try their best. Lessons are orderly and time is used productively, so a lot of ground can be covered in the time available. Teachers do not always make clear such high expectations about pupils' handwriting. They do not insist that pupils consistently use a joined style as they get older, or model such a style for pupils in their own writing. This can impede pupils' fluency in writing, as well as detracting from their presentation.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **is good**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff keep a careful eye on all pupils and are quick to respond if they are concerned. They provide good support to pupils who need it, tailoring this to their particular needs. One parent wrote, 'I find it very reassuring that the staff make a lot of effort to get to know the children individually and care about their needs and areas for development. I know both my children enjoy their school life at St Mary's.'
- The pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and feel safe and secure in school. They know about different forms of bullying and, although they say incidents are rare, are confident that they would know what to do if they were worried, and that the adults would quickly help them.
- Pupils are very positive learners, and are proud of their successes. Their attitudes to learning have improved significantly since the previous inspection. The school has implemented a system that successfully promotes positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour. Pupils talk enthusiastically about this and how it has helped their progress and the behaviour in school. They are keen to gain the rewards for doing well, and say that the sanctions for misdemeanours are fair, and allow them to 'bounce back' by improving.
- Pupils listen attentively to the teachers. They work well together in class when required, listening to and respecting each other's views, putting their own ideas forward confidently and sharing resources amicably. They work equally well independently when this is appropriate.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are friendly and polite. In class, they follow routines well, respond quickly to instructions and work hard. Around the school, they are sensible, show respect for others and help ensure that the school is an orderly, friendly and safe environment. They understand the importance of following rules, relating this to their understanding of British values and obeying the law.
- Pupils have good relationships with each other regardless of background or ability, and get on well with adults. They value each other's contributions. They are caring of each other and willingly take on jobs. They routinely support each other without prompting, as was observed when several older pupils quickly went to assist a younger girl who had fallen in the playground, comforting her before taking her indoors to receive first aid.
- Attendance has improved steadily and is now securely in line with national averages.

Outcomes for pupils **are good**

- Pupils' achievement has gone up steadily and is now good throughout the school. Pupils from different ethnic heritages make similarly good progress.
- Standards are rising, and are broadly average at the end of Key Stage 2. The older pupils are now making good progress, from what were low starting points a few years ago because of weak provision in the past. At the time of the last inspection, many pupils made a poor start to learning basic skills. This undermined their subsequent progress.
- Standards in the early years have improved considerably, with children now leaving Reception in line with national averages, or slightly better. This was not the case in the past. Pupils are now much better placed to attain higher standards in later years. A key part in improvements, in early years and Key Stage 1, has been improved standards in phonics, with Year 1 pupils recently gaining above-average results in the national check of phonics skills.
- The school's many improvements were not reflected in national assessments at Year 6 in 2015. In this cohort, the many gaps in pupils' prior learning were exacerbated by disruption to teaching during their last year in school, as well as problems for particular members of this group. Pupils currently in the school are all doing much better, with the current pupils in Year 6 on track to achieve well this year.
- Disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress as their classmates, and in some instances do better. Gaps in standards between these pupils and their classmates, and between them and pupils nationally, are closing or have closed. A few remaining areas of weakness have been identified by the school, and the deputy headteacher is leading colleagues in addressing these.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in the light of their abilities and starting points, because they get a good mixture of help and challenge that is carefully matched to their particular needs.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make at least as much progress as their classmates and reach similar standards.
- The most-able pupils do well and make good progress from their starting points. This includes the most-able disadvantaged pupils, who make progress as least as good as the other more-able pupils in the school.

Early years provision

is good

- The provision is led and managed well. Leaders have an accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses within the Nursery and Reception classes, and the adults work together successfully to improve things. They have high expectations of children's behaviour, safety and achievement.
- Teaching is good. A particular strength is the way adults continually monitor children's learning, intervening to help them think through their ideas with a good balance of questions and information. This develops children's understanding well, extends their vocabulary and ensures that they are engaged and interested by the activities. This maximises their learning.
- Adults make accurate assessments of how well children are doing, and use these effectively to inform planning. Records confirm that the good progress observed during the inspection is typical across the key stage, so that children are well prepared to go into Year 1. Disadvantaged children do particularly well, so there is now no gap between their attainment and that of their classmates at the end of Reception.
- There is a good curriculum with a wide range of interesting activities provided indoors and out. Children enjoy learning, and their enthusiasm for outdoor play was apparent when they played with water or paints, or built structures such as a fire engine or a motorbike to play on. Their involvement continued despite light rain because the children were suitably dressed, and able to play on in comfort.
- Children behave well, are safe and feel secure in the provision. They have good relationships with each other and with adults, and the adults ensure that children develop high levels of acceptance and tolerance of others from different backgrounds.
- Links with parents are good and support both children's good progress and the good provision made for their welfare and to keep them safe.
- Achievement is good. Children start in the setting with attainment that varies but is generally typical for, or below, that found for their age. By the end of Reception, their overall attainment is a little above average.

School details

Unique reference number	110436
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10002396

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	331
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Randall
Headteacher	Vania Williams
Telephone number	01753 64 4471
Website	www.stmarysfarnhamroyal.org
Email address	office@stmarysfarnhamroyal.org
Date of previous inspection	9–10 October 2013

Information about this school

- The school is above average in size for a primary school.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to staffing, including in senior leadership roles. A new deputy headteacher has taken up post. There have also been important changes to the membership of the governing body.
- The school has a part-time Nursery class, which children attend either in the morning or in the afternoon. Reception children attend full-time.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- About half the pupils are White British. The rest come from a wide range of different ethnic heritages. About a quarter of the pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is about a third, which is above average. The pupil premium is extra government funding to support the education of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and children who are looked after by the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in every class. They undertook several of these observations jointly with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- The team analysed work in pupils' books, and scrutinised displays around the school. Several pupils were heard to read.
- The school's own tracking of pupils' progress was examined. Inspectors checked a variety of other documentation, including that related to keeping pupils safe and records of the work of the governing body. The team looked at a range of information on the school's website.
- Inspectors held formal discussions with staff, governors and pupils. A meeting was held with a representative of the local authority. The team also chatted with pupils informally around the school, in class, and at break and lunchtimes.
- The team took note of 42 replies to the online survey, Parent View, including a number of written comments. Questionnaires from 29 staff were also analysed.

Inspection team

Steven Hill, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Crouch	Ofsted Inspector
William James	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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