

Beaminster St Mary's Academy

Clay Lane, Beaminster, Dorset DT8 3BY

Inspection dates

24–25 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders, including governors, have been too generous in their evaluations of pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching. As a result, there are still inconsistencies in teaching and learning, which slows pupils' progress.
- Governors do not hold school leaders strongly enough to account in pursuing identified weaknesses. Governors' questions do not lead to fast enough improvements in teaching and learning.
- Middle leaders do not yet make a strong contribution to improvements in the school, especially in English and mathematics. Consequently, the quality of teaching in these subjects remains too inconsistent.
- Leaders' plans and actions often lack the precision and detail needed to ensure that those pupils who have fallen behind can catch up quickly. Consequently, not enough pupils are meeting the standards expected of them by the time they leave the school.
- There are still too many weaknesses in the teaching of basic mathematical and writing skills. This means that pupils across the school are not well enough supported to meet their full potential, including the most able.
- Weaker teaching does not challenge or support pupils effectively. As a result, pupils can become distracted or lose interest and the quality of their work suffers.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders' recent actions are effective. Teaching is starting to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Teaching in the early years is effective. Children get a good start to their education and are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- The teaching of phonics is good. Pupils' outcomes in the Year 1 phonics check are rapidly improving.
- Leaders' pastoral care for vulnerable pupils is effective.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - pupils understand what they need to learn to build their skills, knowledge and understanding more rapidly
 - pupils' spelling, handwriting, punctuation and grammar in writing lead to higher standards, including for those who are most able
 - teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics can effectively challenge and support pupils of all abilities, particularly in their calculation, problem-solving and reasoning skills
 - time is used more effectively by teachers to check pupils' learning and to avoid pupils losing interest through unnecessary repetition.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders' plans to raise standards are more precise and measurable, including the strategy for disadvantaged pupils
 - subject leaders are effective in securing improvements through their monitoring roles and responsibilities
 - governors take further steps to analyse and scrutinise particular weaknesses in greater depth so that these can be fully met.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not yet secured a consistently strong profile of teaching in a range of subjects across the school, which slows pupils' progress. However, teaching has improved since the academy conversion in February 2014.
- Leaders, including governors, have been too generous in their own evaluations of the school's performance. Teaching is not yet supporting pupils to reach the standards of which they are capable by the time they leave the school.
- Leaders' plans and actions lack the precision needed to improve identified weaknesses or to track pupils closely enough, for example, through checks on the progress of the most able disadvantaged pupils or those identified as falling behind through pupil progress meetings. As a result, some pupils are not catching up quickly enough.
- The roles of subject leaders for English and mathematics are not yet fully developed. Although leaders undertake work to check standards in their subjects, they have not completed visits to lessons to confirm their judgements. Consequently, their evaluations of teaching and learning are too generous.
- The headteacher is effective in driving specific aspects of improvement work, for example in modelling phonics lessons, which is having a positive impact. However, the capacity of the school is limited because other leaders do not yet make a consistently strong enough contribution to improving teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders have taken the right steps to identify appropriate priorities for improvement, for example, in improving pupils' spelling. They know what needs to be improved and have been successful in improving outcomes in the early years foundation stage, as well as in the teaching of phonics.
- The headteacher has been proactive in challenging weak teaching through the school's management of staff and appraisal processes. Although this has created turbulence and teaching is still not consistently good, it has led to significant improvements in teaching, learning and assessment over time.
- Those with a lead for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities know the cohort well and direct funding for pupils appropriately. However, plans are not always precise enough to improve consistency in the rates of progress these pupils make.
- The impact of the range of training and professional development is starting to take effect, including support and induction for new staff and governors. A successful partnership with another primary school is enabling teachers to engage in high-quality, professional dialogue. Consequently, continuing improvements are being made, for example in the early years foundation stage.
- Leaders provide a broad curriculum that includes the arts, sports and technologies. As a result, pupils enjoy a varied approach to learning and can apply their skills in a variety of contexts. For example, pupils' 'aboriginal' art is on display in the hall and there are events where pupils study the creation story for all faiths.

- The curriculum is also enriched through a wider range of clubs and activities. There are numerous after-school sports clubs, including those for netball, football, choir and drama, which are delivered at various times. Further opportunities such as 'eco-club', a photography competition and breakfast club support pupils' development well, enabling pupils to make regular contributions to the school and feel valued as members of the community.
- Leaders promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through lessons, the wider curriculum and throughout the school day. Art from other cultures, shared celebration assemblies and the teaching of world faiths and non-faith mean that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They show respect and tolerance for the views of others.
- Homework is established across the school and includes reading, writing and mathematics. The best examples involve parents and enthuse the pupils, particularly in the early years foundation stage and in Year 5.
- Leaders' promotion of individual rights and equalities is effective. The inclusive ethos and values of the school are well represented by its Christian foundation and are a strength. As a result, pupils mix together well and integrate fully across the school day and in the full range of activities or events.
- The regular support from the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust (DSAT) board has had variable impact. There have been notable improvements since the academy conversion and the school is now in a position to tackle remaining weaknesses. However, previously some advice given to the local governing board has been ambiguous or confusing. As a result, school views of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have been overly generous, which has slowed the rate of improvement in teaching.

Governance of the school

- The local governing board is appropriately led and managed with the full designation of key roles and responsibilities. Roles for safeguarding and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are given appropriate priority.
- Governors now have an accurate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, their previous evaluations have sometimes been too generous. As a result, teaching is not consistently strong across the school.
- Governors make regular visits to the school, which are directly linked to agreed priorities in the school development plan. Although these are beneficial, issues that arise are not then subsequently followed through or checked with enough rigour. This limits the impact of governors' monitoring and evaluation work.

- Governors ensure that additional funding supports disadvantaged pupils' pastoral needs well. School leaders know who the eligible pupils are (including in the early years and for those looked after by the local authority) and ask relevant questions about the impact of the grant. However, the school's strategy for disadvantaged pupils lacks precision with regard to milestones or expectations for pupils' achievement, including for the most able ('endeavourers'). A lack of accountability and checks on academic outcomes means that too many disadvantaged pupils are not meeting the standards expected of them.
- A scrutiny of documentation showed that governors request regular updates about vulnerable groups, including children looked after. They ask a range of relevant and challenging questions to inform their decision making.
- The additional funding for physical education and sport is well used so that pupils benefit from a range of sporting clubs and activities. As a result, participation in sports has increased, including for disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has three designated lead officers for safeguarding who are fully trained and can be available across the school day. The school's processes for observing and referring pupils with child protection plans are effective. Records are well managed and comprehensive. As a result, vulnerable pupils are well supported through a full range of professional care which is initiated through the family liaison officer and school staff. As a result, pupils at risk of harm outside school are supported through timely interventions and referrals.
- School leaders ensure that mandatory employment checks and safer recruitment practice are securely in place. Staff are diligent and ensure that additional checks are undertaken if needed, for example in employing cover or supply teachers. Training for child protection is current and up to date. When asked, staff speak confidently about how to recognise signs of abuse and how to report or escalate concerns. Systems and processes are well communicated.
- The safeguarding culture is strong because pupils are also involved in understanding risk, and can talk about how to stay safe (including online). Pupils know how to stay safe and have confidence in school staff.
- Risk assessments and related documentation for health and safety are compliant. Governors were required to respond quickly to an incident relating to site security recently. In this event, a rapid risk assessment and review led to an overhaul of arrangements and the installation of new gates.
- School leaders have effective systems in place to manage and support vulnerable pupils. Pupils are encouraged and well supported to manage their behaviour, and can use a reflection room. Incidents of bullying are rare. When these occur, school leaders act swiftly and decisively. The application of the school's anti-bullying policy promotes involvement, with all sets of parents being involved. Regular communication and parental involvement in matters relating to safeguarding further exemplify the school's commitment to safeguarding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is improving, although it remains inconsistent, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of what the pupils can achieve. Consequently, some pupils do not meet benchmarks or standards expected of them. This is particularly true of the most able pupils where a lack of challenge restricts the depth and application of their skills and knowledge.
- Teachers do not always challenge pupils sufficiently, especially if they notice a decline in pupils' work. On occasion, this was seen where pupils' handwriting had deteriorated. Consequently, pupils are not always motivated to make the improvements necessary or to build quickly on previous learning.
- The teaching of writing is underdeveloped. Teachers are now rightly focusing on improving pupils' spelling, and training has been useful for teachers in planning sequences to help pupils to draft, organise and order their writing. However, teaching is not yet routinely concentrated on securing basic skills in handwriting, punctuation and spelling.
- Teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics is variable. As a result, pupils sometimes fail to learn effective strategies for solving mathematical problems and can use inefficient methods of calculation. Pupils have limited opportunities to apply what they have learned to different contexts, which can impede their ability to justify, explain or develop their mathematical reasoning.
- Teachers' use of time before or during lessons to check what pupils know, understand and can do is not typically precise enough. As a result, pupils cannot build quickly enough on prior learning and sometimes repeat skills that they already have. However, there are increasing examples in the school where better assessment is now securing faster rates of progress for pupils.
- Pupils do not show a strong enough understanding of what they need to do to get better in their learning. Although feedback to pupils is commonly in line with the school's own assessment policy, written feedback or guidance sometimes lacks the precision needed to be useful to pupils.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers use a range of interesting approaches to teach phonics, which inspire and motivate the pupils. Teachers show a secure understanding of the progression of skills in phonics that relate to national expectations.
- Teaching assistants are used well and deployed effectively to support pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers and teaching assistants have established strong relationships with pupils. Consequently, this promotes a positive environment and ethos in lessons for pupils to work.
- Teachers' questioning skills are improving and there are times when this increases the challenge to pupils effectively, for example with higher attaining pupils in Year 5 translating and reflecting shapes in different mirror lines. When this happens, pupils make strong progress and enjoy demonstrating their skills and knowledge.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The family liaison worker and other staff work effectively to identify and support pupils who have complex needs or are vulnerable. Programmes of support are carefully designed and matched to individual needs. As a result, pupils are able to engage, contribute and make good progress in terms of their personal, social and emotional development.
- School leaders and staff are effective in working with other agencies and professionals to ensure that vulnerable pupils are well supported through home and school. This extended care enables pupils to access a range of services, which strongly supports their personal development and welfare.
- The school uses creative and innovative ways to support vulnerable pupils. For example, disadvantaged pupils and those looked after by the local authority benefit from additional language and communication work off-site sessions with a pony club. As a result, pupils gain confidence and other personal skills that are essential for overcoming barriers in their lives.
- Pupils who have complex learning and medical needs are well supported and feel valued. One parent, whose view was typical of many, wrote, 'Although [child's name] has some learning difficulties he is always confident and willing to have a go at new challenges. He never seems to be disheartened if he finds it hard.'
- Parents recognise this strength of the school. In Parent View, they are overwhelmingly positive about how well their children are looked after and cared for. Parents value the good work of the school in supporting pupils in being increasingly self-confident and aware, and as a result, enabling pupils to be in a better position to learn, grow and develop.
- Pupils are sociable, friendly and cooperative. They respect the school's values and abide by the wording in the charter which they helped to create: responsibility, friendship, respect, trust and kindness.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Behaviour and conduct around the school are typically pleasant and happy. Pupils mix well and are supportive of one another. However, pupils do not always take pride in their work and this is not always tackled by teachers. As a result, pupils' attitudes and willingness to learn can slow their progress.
- Leaders have taken a firm stance on attendance and have implemented a range of effective actions to improve this. As a result, school attendance figures now compare well with the national average, especially taking into account the attendance at the point of the academy conversion in 2014.

- Leaders take effective action to ensure that general behaviour and conduct around the school promote a safe and secure environment for the pupils. An overwhelming majority of parents and pupils agree that behaviour in the school is much improved and that the pupils are well behaved. The school's behaviour logs and records show that any incidents are quickly and proportionately dealt with.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in 2016 at the end of key stage 2 was lower than the national average in reading. Pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics was particularly low. Current attainment in the school in each of these subjects is still typically lower than expected but improving well.
- The percentage of pupils attaining the higher standard in 2016 at the end of key stage 2 was also lower than the national average, especially in reading and writing. Evidence in pupils' workbooks and the assessment information held by school show that the most able pupils are not yet working at sufficient depth, including the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Inspection activities found that current rates of progress for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics across the school are now accelerating. However, middle-attaining boys in Years 4 to 6 remain a focus group, particularly in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils are now making stronger progress than their peers to catch up, particularly in reading and writing. However, those disadvantaged pupils who have complex needs, as well as the most able, make more variable progress from their starting points.
- The majority of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are now making strong progress. Higher needs pupils, including those who receive specialist support and provision, make good progress. However, school leaders are aware of the remaining proportion (about a third) who still need to make greater progress in aspects of reading, writing or mathematics.
- Pupils' writing skills in key stage 1 have started to improve rapidly following the direct intervention of the headteacher in the previous term. Similarly, following a decline in the school's Year 1 phonics screening check results in 2016, the pupils are now able to use phonics to segment and blend appropriately for their age.
- A detailed scrutiny of work showed that pupils' spelling skills are still weak. There are errors in common spelling patterns, even into the older classes, which hampers the progress and fluency of pupils' overall writing skills. Physical handwriting skills are inconsistent.
- Pupils' reading skills are secure, including for the most able and older pupils. Pupils can explain how they read for pleasure and those ways in which the school helps them in reading. However, lower attaining pupils who find reading more difficult did not always have a book that was well matched to their needs. As a result, they struggled to read or infer meaning from the text.

Early years provision

Good

- Despite attainment being predicted to decline for the current Reception Year, rates of progress for the children are consistently strong across the curriculum. In particular, accelerated progress is seen in writing for boys and girls, and for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Fewer children, in particular boys, leave the early years foundation stage having exceeded the early learning goals (40–60-month age-related statements). This is rightly a priority for leaders and teachers.
- Leaders target those children eligible for the additional early years funding. As a result, they are making good progress from their starting points and are already catching up with the other children in key areas of reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching in the early years foundation stage is good because staff use assessments well as a daily part of their practice. Records and observations of children are used effectively to make adjustments in teaching and ensure timely interventions. As a result, children make good progress across the curriculum.
- The learning environment is inviting, bright and stimulating with effective links across the curriculum. Children make sensible choices and decide where to play through carefully constructed activities, including the outdoors. On a cold day, the teaching had incorporated naturally occurring ice into the learning environment, where some boys were enjoying breaking it and experimenting with its properties and texture.
- Teachers and teaching assistants ask skilful questions that gently challenge the children. Adults are mindful of not over-compensating for the children and expect them to undertake tasks and activities independently. For example, children were opening bananas for themselves and cutting through the polythene with scissors to open the milk cartons. Consequently, the children develop personal skills that prepare them well for Year 1.
- The school engages effectively with parents and promotes strong home–school relationships. These start with effective transition arrangements and include assessment practice and homework. Parents recognise the positive start that the children receive.

School details

Unique reference number	140560
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10024906

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	125
Appropriate authority	Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust
Chair	Jessica Teasdale
Headteacher	Teri Goodinson
Telephone number	01308 862201
Website	www.beaminsterstmarys.dsat.org.uk
Email address	office@beaminsterstmarys.dsat.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Beaminster St Mary's Academy converted to be a member of the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust in February 2014. At that time, the predecessor school had been put into an Ofsted category of concern.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There are fewer girls than boys in the school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the additional grant for disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average, including those who have an education, health and care plan.
- Children in the early years foundation stage are taught on site and are fully integrated into the work of the school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited all classes and were accompanied by either the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders of the school, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher, as well as subject leaders for mathematics and English. Other additional meetings were held with the special educational needs coordinator, representatives of the school's governing board, the family liaison worker and the pupil premium champion.
- During the inspection, the lead inspector also met with the chief executive officer and academy improvement director for the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust.
- The inspectors scrutinised a number of documents, including minutes of meetings of the local governing board, assessment information, the school's self-evaluation, records of governors' monitoring visits, the school development plan, anonymised performance management records and evidence relating to safer recruitment and child protection.
- Most visits to classrooms were conducted through accompanied learning walks. However, inspectors carried out an additional lesson observation in Year 6 at the request of the school and a physical education observation in the Reception Year.
- The inspectors undertook a joint scrutiny of pupils' books with the senior leaders to evaluate the quality of work and check the accuracy of assessment information held by the school in writing and mathematics.
- The inspectors spoke to children through various activities during the inspection, and one inspector met with children from both key stages. An inspector also heard pupils of different abilities read in Years 2 and 6, including the most able pupils and those in receipt of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils.
- An inspector observed pupils' behaviour at playtime, lunch and in the breakfast club.
- The 30 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspectors also considered comments provided alternatively, such as meeting directly or via letters. The online responses of 18 staff members were also considered as part of the inspection evidence.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Beeks

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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