

CHALLENGE PARTNERS: Quality Assurance Review Written Report

Name of School:	St Mary's C of E Primary School
School Address:	College Road, Purton, Swindon, SN5 4AR
Hub:	Royal Wootton Bassett Hub

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Unique Reference Number:	126350
Local Authority:	Wiltshire
Type of School:	Primary
School Category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Number on roll:	337
Head teacher/Principal:	Naomi Clarke

Date of last Ofsted inspection:	2-3 July 2013
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good

Date of Quality Assurance Review:	1-3 March 2017
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QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW – SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES¹

School Improvement Strategies:	Outstanding
Outcomes for Pupils are:	Good
Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:	Good
Area of Excellence:	Confirmed and valid for 3 years
Assessment and monitoring	
Previously accredited Areas of Excellence:	
Phonics	

Overall Review Evaluation

The Quality Assurance Review found indicators that St Mary's C of E Primary School appears to be at the top of the Good grade as judged by Ofsted in the school's previous Ofsted report and is working towards Outstanding.

1. Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.

Information about the school

- St. Mary's C of E Primary School is a much larger than average sized primary school in a rural location on the outskirts of Swindon.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is around half the national average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few have English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is in line with the national average. However, the percentage of pupils with an Education Health Care plan is below the national average.
- The school has a relatively stable pupil population, with the majority of pupils remaining at St. Mary's for the entirety of the primary phase of their education. However, numbers have fluctuated across year groups recently.

School Improvement Strategies

What Went Well

- The senior leadership team (SLT) has come through a turbulent period of staff changes. It is now settled and under the leadership of the inspirational headteacher who is fully focused on providing the best possible learning experiences for the pupils at St. Mary's. Leadership is distributed so that all staff are accountable for the performance of their class.
- A key strategy has been to 'up-skill' the middle leader stratum through this devolved leadership initiative. Effective Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has been implemented to utilise expertise better and to give this group of staff a clearer understanding of the school's data. Subject leaders have visited local schools to observe good practice and colleagues from other schools have come in to St. Mary's to provide support. A cluster event – 'The Art of Being Brilliant' – was highly motivational and has contributed significantly to improving attitudes to leadership and expectations. This has ensured that teachers and leaders recognise that there is no ceiling on learning.
- The school is very data rich and this is used effectively. An internal data dashboard is used on a half termly basis. This reinforces the notion that individual teachers are responsible for their data and they analyse it closely. The SLT supports individual staff to ensure improved levels of performance, ensuring there is greater consistency and an increased sharing of good practice. The Pupil Premium First initiative enables vulnerable group of pupils to receive the first wave of intervention early on so that it can have a more rapid impact on improving their learning. This has led to clear improvements that are being seen across the school.

- There is close moderation within the school and across ten cluster schools. This adds to greater confidence in predictions, enables swifter intervention and culminates in greater consistency.
- The school accesses Olevi teacher programmes and almost all teachers have attended the Improving Teacher Programme or the Outstanding Teacher Programme, as appropriate. Teaching Assistants (TAs) have enrolled on the Outstanding Teaching Assistant Programme and this has enabled them to play an even greater role in supporting learning in class. Following any CPD, there is an expectation that teachers will present their findings to other staff to improve teaching and learning across the school. Staff meetings are now far more professional development focused, including 'Five Minute Updates' where leaders share knowledge for the benefit of all staff. This is already having a positive impact on attainment and progress and the setting of very high predictions for this year.
- Perspective data software is used for performance management to set targets for teaching. Leaders triangulate assessment through data, pupil voice and learning walks to give a clear picture of performance. Middle and senior leaders work together; paired observations lead to better quality conversations and these improve leadership skills. TAs have been included in this type of performance management this term. Working with TAs in other classes in a mentoring guise is to be introduced in order to continue to develop the effectiveness of this group of staff.
- 'Maths Counts' is a trial scheme from Bath Spa University that has been implemented to boost mathematics performance for pupils whose progress is too slow from Key Stage 1 to 2. This is a very focused intervention on a 1-1 basis where TAs monitor eight pupils. It is very intensive but progress is visible in every session. The school will benefit from being able to retain the very valuable resources across the school once the trial has ended.
- The Self Evaluation Form and School Improvement Plan are produced jointly with all staff and governors. These documents provide clearly identified priorities and it is straightforward to track their impact through clear success criteria. Termly reviews ensure that the leadership team knows exactly how work on the priorities is progressing and 'RAG-rating' captures evidence of completed areas and where continued focus is required.

Even Better If...

... leaders continued to improve outcomes across the school, particularly focusing on diminishing differences between groups of learners.

Pupil Outcomes

- In 2016, children entered the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with levels of ability below those typical of children their age. However, they made good progress with 81% achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) by the end of the year. This was an improvement on the previous year and considerably above the national average.
- In the Phonics Screening Check in Year 1, 79% of pupils passed the test. This was a slight dip on last year but still in line with the national average. Figures are set to rise this year.
- Performance in Key Stage 1 was impressive, with expected levels of attainment comfortably above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils in Key Stage 1 attained in line with the national average in all three areas. All pupils have continued to make pleasing progress since moving into Year 3.
- Attainment in Key Stage 2 declined slightly on previous years in 2016. Writing and reading were broadly in line with the national average; mathematics was considerably below. Working at greater depth saw inconsistencies across the board, with writing above the national average, reading in line and mathematics below. The combined score was positive but this was largely due to the strength of writing across the school. This dip in attainment is attributable to a larger than usual number of pupils who had learning needs not necessarily covered by the terms 'disadvantaged' or SEND. Their performance was just below the national average in reading and writing and considerably below in mathematics. It must be stated that in addition, there were larger numbers of pupils in the more 'recognised groups'. Leaders are confident that the strategies they have put in place for the current Year 6 will return outcomes to previously higher levels.
- Leaders are ambitious in setting the highest standards to which their pupils aspire. This ensures that teachers increase the breadth and depth of their teaching to achieve their objectives. The return to consistently high achievement will be aided by the forensic nature of the school's assessment model. This examines every pupil in every class to a 'micro-level'. Any underperformance is highlighted quickly and remedial intervention put into place so that the individual is back on track. As such, GLD outcomes are set to remain high and phonics set to be significantly above the national average. Current indications for 2017 outcomes at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage Two are also predicted to rise.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

What Went Well

- Teachers establish strong relationships with pupils, offer appropriate praise and manage behaviour well. One teacher started her lesson very effectively with a breathing activity to ensure pupils were calm after break. This enabled pupils to get down to their work more quickly and without disturbance. Most pupils display high levels of engagement in all classes. Under the guidance of their class teacher, pupils are fully focused on their learning tasks and very little 'off-task' behaviour was observed.
- Teachers use interesting 'hooks' in lessons and ensure that lessons are planned in sequence. This maximises teaching time and motivates and enthuses pupils, prompting one comment, 'learning is fun!'. Teachers also develop challenges in their planning with a 'star' system according to difficulty. Pupils gain independence by selecting their own level of challenge; 'we even have 4* challenges!', said one pupil.
- The learning environment and lesson resources support purposeful learning. They help pupils to progress and to develop skills for independence and this is clearly recognised by pupils. One pupil stated, 'We have things in our classroom to help us when we're stuck'.
- Progress in writing is evident in books, especially so in Year 6. Pupils in all year groups take care with their work and presentation is good.
- Staff use 'next steps' guidance to enable pupils to address misconceptions and to deepen their understanding. Staff often pose challenging questions when giving feedback to which pupils eagerly respond.
- Some highly effective questioning was observed which encourages pupils to develop their own enquiry and questioning skills. They are keen to share their understanding and frequently ask subsidiary questions of the teacher to deepen their knowledge.
- Many pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and are developing positive attitudes. They are not afraid to take risks and recognise the importance of learning from mistakes and to keep trying. This development of resilience in their learning contributes well to their progress and stamina.
- The deployment of teaching assistants and other adults in the classroom is a key strength of the school. They provide effective support and guidance, not just to the pupils to whom they are assigned, but also to the class in general. One pupil summed up the valuable role they play by saying, 'teaching assistants help us but don't give us the answers!'.

Even Better If...

... teachers applied a range of strategies to involve pupils in more active participation in their learning in the first part of the lesson.

... teachers ensured that they consistently plan learning that is appropriate for all learners with activities which do not limit learning.

Quality of Area of Excellence

Assessment and monitoring

Why has this area been identified as a strength?

The school has had an existing assessment tool that has been modified over time. However, underperformance by some pupils in 2016 precipitated a review and evaluation of its impact. Leaders recognised that the existing system focused too heavily on in-year progress rather than progress from starting points. The current deputy headteacher has taken responsibility for developing this area, the 'Learning Journey', so that the system has now reached its finished state.

Leaders have identified that there are no recurring trends in their school's data so they needed a method of ensuring that every cohort could be closely tracked; there was no group with obvious needs. The school's own refined method of tracking allows for swift, bespoke interventions to be actioned and, more importantly, progress can be noted so that the intervention can be ceased or modified accordingly. The latest incarnation of the 'Learning Journey' is not just aimed at disadvantaged pupils. It can certainly be used to push and challenge more able pupils to higher achievement. Overall, it results in teachers being more accountable for their groups.

What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

Leaders have attempted to identify groups or individuals who were at risk of not making sufficient progress. A range of professionals, along with the expertise of the deputy headteacher, has produced the current system that has been shown to improve outcomes. The new system has been presented at the annual Headteacher Conference in January and other schools have already come to St. Mary's to learn more about it; one has since adopted it in their own school. Leaders are confident they can offer this as an area on a Challenge Partners' Leadership Day in the future.

What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?

There are already positive early indicators of the impact of this method of assessing progress at a 'micro-level'. Leaders are confident that this means of providing early support or challenge to all pupils will result in improved outcomes across the school this summer. Differences in the achievement of different groups are already being diminished.

What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?

Following discussion with the headteacher, the school would like some additional support with:

- strategies to improve outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2.

This review will support the school's continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities.