

St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Aided Junior School, Brentwood

Sawyers Hall Lane, Brentwood, CM15 9BX

Inspection dates 16–17 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The standards achieved at the end of Year 6 are well above average in English and above average in mathematics. Some pupils did exceptionally well in the 2012 national tests.
- Teaching is generally good and some is outstanding. Lessons are well planned and pupils enjoy learning.
- Pupils learning benefits from a wide range of experiences and activities that strongly promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' enjoy school and their attendance is above average.
- Pupils behave well and they get on very well with each other and with the adults in the school.
- Pupils feel very safe. They report that, 'Bullying is rare and if it does occur, it is dealt with very quickly.'
- The newly appointed headteacher and the deputy headteacher have accurately assessed the school's strengths and areas requiring improvement and have a clear vision for the future. They provide good support for the teachers.
- The governing body is knowledgeable and supports the school well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough of the teaching is outstanding.
- Progress in mathematics is not as strong as English.
- Some lessons do not ensure that the needs of all pupils are met.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons, of which two were joint observations with senior leaders.
- In addition, other direct observations of pupils learning were undertaken. This included hearing pupils from Years 3 and Year 6 reading, and attending an assembly.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents including: pupils' books; the school's data on progress and attainment for all pupils; records on monitoring and improving the quality of teaching, including information on the performance management of teachers; the school development plan and self-evaluation report; and all aspects of safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of the 49 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and met informally with parents at the start of the school day.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, and many informal opportunities were taken to talk with pupils.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the subject leaders in mathematics and English, the special educational needs coordinator and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors held telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority and the headteacher of the neighbouring infant school.

Inspection team

Valerie Palmer, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jane Richmond

Additional Inspector

David Belsey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized junior school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The percentage of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that a greater proportion is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - all pupils, including the more able, are fully engaged in lessons and are set challenging work
 - leaders rigorously follow up with teachers the points for improvement that they identify when they observe lessons.
- Improve progress in mathematics for all pupils by:
 - implementing the new policy for teaching calculation skills and ensuring that it is fully understood by parents
 - further developing the skills of all staff through training and the sharing of good practice.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards achieved in Year 6 in 2012 were well above the national average in English and above in mathematics. Pupils were two terms ahead of pupils nationally in English and a term ahead in mathematics. A small proportion of pupils achieved Level 6 in mathematics, which is much higher than the nationally expected level.
- Pupils join Year 3 with standards in English and mathematics which are higher than pupils nationally. Over the four years pupils make greater progress in English than in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do well. They make similar progress to others due to the effective and flexible support which they receive. Support staff are deployed well and teachers adapt their planning to ensure that all pupils can fully access their lessons. Teaching assistants are good at providing clear explanations to ensure that all pupils are confident and get the best from every lesson. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, pupils applied themselves well and made good progress in measuring activities tailored to their needs because the teacher and teaching assistants were able to accurately assess the level of support required and adapt it as necessary. This enabled pupils to remain independent, motivated and on task.
- Pupils whose first language is believed not to be English achieve well and make good progress in English and mathematics. A small proportion of pupils are from other ethnic backgrounds and they too achieve well in all subjects and make similar rates of progress.
- The school makes good use of the pupil premium funding to ensure that classes are small so that those eligible have the same access to learning and make equally good rates of progress as other pupils.
- Pupils do well in English because activities are matched to their different abilities. In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils were asked to write a descriptive paragraph and then correct it themselves by assessing the value of the adjectives, adverbs and connectives included. The work was matched to pupils needs in order for them to fulfil their full potential. Pupils do not do as well in mathematics as they do in English because not all staff have a clear, consistent knowledge of the school's calculation methods. This lack of consistency sometimes leads to tasks which do not always challenge all pupils or move their learning on at a brisk enough pace.
- Pupils make very good progress in reading. Many pupils said that they read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books within school and many said they read for pleasure outside of school. Pupils show good knowledge of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) in order to read unfamiliar words. They can answer comprehension questions and read with expression.
- Teachers are good at capturing pupils' interests through a wide range of practical activities. This was clearly demonstrated in a science lesson when pupils were asked to find the best material to make a supermarket bag. Pupils responded well and enjoyed looking at the different types of materials, using magnifying glasses and discussing which would be the most suitable material for the bag. Pupils talk positively about practical activities which bring topics to life. For example the Egyptian day gave pupils the opportunity to experience, first hand, how a celebration event would have taken place.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. The large majority of parents and carers agree that their child is taught well, and inspection evidence supports this view.
- In the best lessons, teachers demonstrated excellent subject knowledge, matched tasks to pupils' needs, ensured pupils were fully challenged at all times, rectified any misconceptions, asked probing questions and ensured that a brisk pace was maintained. This was clearly demonstrated in a mathematics lesson investigating median, mode and mean. Pupils, working at an appropriate level, were animated during discussions, focussed on the tasks presented and enjoyed the extension work using computers. This particularly appealed to boys.
- Staff have very strong working relations with pupils. They offer praise for effort which builds the pupils' confidence and self-esteem. This promotes a positive atmosphere for learning. Consequently, pupils seek help easily, share their views confidently and respond positively to all adults.
- Teachers plan with pupils' different abilities in mind, using assessment information to devise activities that provide a good level of challenge for specific groups. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those supported by the pupil premium, benefit from small classes and receive additional high-quality support particularly in speech and language. Staff identify the needs of pupils and successfully identify the smaller steps and methods required and thus tailor work which motivates pupils and leads to better progress.
- From the start of this term, a new marking policy has been introduced and the quality of marking seen within books has greatly improved. Detailed, positive feedback to pupils is evident and they understand what they have to do to further improve their work.
- Teachers regularly assess pieces of work using national guidance. The results are recorded on the school's tracking system and this is used to identify the next steps a pupil will need to make and how they progress throughout the year.
- High-quality displays celebrate pupils' achievement and working walls explain relevant vocabulary. They also give guidance for pupils to be independent and provide reference information relating to current issues.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

is good

- Pupils are polite and courteous. They get on well with each other taking pride in their school.
- Pupils, generally, behave well in lessons and around school. They are eager to learn, willing to take part and keen to try out new things. In closely supervised situations, such as in assembly, behaviour is exemplary.
- According to Parent View, the vast majority of parents and carers say that their child is happy to come to school, that the school is safe and that behaviour is good. Staff, also, agree overwhelmingly that the school is safe, harmonious and promotes good behaviour.
- Pupils say they feel safe and can readily identify ways of keeping themselves and their friends safe in a variety of situations, including when using the internet.

- Pupils know what bullying is and what to do about it. They say that threatening behaviour or persistent name-calling is rare. If, on the odd occasion, it does occur, then adults deal with it swiftly and effectively. They are in no doubt that any of the adults would support them if they were worried, and they feel confident to ask for help.
- There have been no exclusions for a number of years and attendance is above average. The vast majority of pupils spoken to during the inspection say they enjoy coming to school.

The leadership and management is good

- Although they are a new team, the headteacher and deputy headteacher together provide strong leadership and show a determination to pursue excellence on behalf of all the pupils. All staff know what the school is trying to achieve and fully endorse these aims. They feel well supported and are proud of their school.
- Enthusiastic subject leaders monitor their subjects and have an accurate picture of the quality of provision and how well pupils do. They know how to move their subjects forward and are confident that senior managers will support them. As part of the school development plan, there are clear action plans in place giving greater consistency of approach to enable all subjects to move forward.
- Performance management is rigorous and targeted at improving pupil progress in mathematics, the quality of teaching and teachers' professional development. The consistency of methods used by pupils in calculations and the sharing of good practice in mathematics is central to this. Lesson observations are integral to this development and at present the points identified for improvement are not followed up robustly to accelerate school improvement.
- The school works well with parents, carers and pupils, and they greatly value its work. This was evident in the views expressed on Parent View, as 96% of parents said they would recommend this school to other parents.
- The pupil premium has been used to support smaller classes. The impact of this was clearly seen in a scrutiny of the English books of pupils who benefit from the pupil premium. There was evidence of rapid improvement in the quality of descriptive writing since the start of term for these pupils.
- The local authority has provided minimal support in the past as the school had gained advice from independent providers. However, this year the school has agreed a level of support with the local authority.
- The school ensures that appropriate checks are made on the suitability of adults to work with pupils and that all statutory requirements for pupils' safeguarding are fully met.
- The curriculum meets the needs and interests of the pupils well and provides memorable experiences. It is enriched by themed days, residential visits, visitors and visits, as well as a wide range of clubs including information and communication technology, sports, arts and crafts. Pupils benefit from having the opportunity to learn to play an instrument, sing in choirs, play in church services and take part in musical productions. A parent stated, 'Musical opportunities are absolutely totally brilliant.' Pupils explained that they like mathematics 'because it is important' and English because 'it makes you think'.

- The school promotes pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong. The school council's activities include fundraising for various organisations around the world and the eco council cares for the school environment including tidiness, habitats for birds and bugs, and tree planting.

- There are good links with the infant and all the local secondary schools. Pupils benefit from accessing the sporting facilities and the science laboratories to extend their knowledge.

- **The governance of the school:**
 - is good because those who lead the governing body are passionate in their determination that the school will continue to improve
 - demonstrates a very good understanding of the strengths and areas which the school needs to improve
 - oversee the performance management of staff effectively and ensure the school makes good use of the available resources
 - provides challenge and support to the school leaders and has good links with the local community.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	115179
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	395686

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided School
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	309
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Colin Hewitt
Headteacher	Dean Moran
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2008
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