

English Martyrs' RC Primary School

Beaufront Gardens, Fenham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne And Wear, NE5 2SA

Inspection dates 29–30 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Standards have been rising for three years so that pupils' achievement is now good, particularly in reading and mathematics. Reading has improved the most because pupils are taught their letters and sounds well and they have many opportunities to practise their reading.
- Teaching is good. Teachers plan interesting lessons that are well suited to the needs of most pupils. They mark work regularly and accurately so that pupils know how well they are doing.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, put the best interests of pupils at the heart of everything they do. They have been successful in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection
- There is a warm, nurturing atmosphere with high levels of respect between adults and pupils. Pupils are made to feel important and enjoy taking responsibility for themselves and each other. As a result, they are polite, friendly and well behaved. Pupils say they feel safe.
- The curriculum is excellent. It helps pupils to develop good spiritual, moral and social skills, as well as an excellent understanding of their own Christian faith and the faiths of other cultures.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching and there is a small amount of teaching that requires improvement.
- Achievement in writing has improved but is lower than in reading and mathematics. This is because pupils' handwriting and spelling require improvement. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their writing to a good standard in other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons taught by 17 teachers and one teaching assistant, and made four shorter visits to small groups being taught outside their main lessons. In addition, inspectors visited nine lessons to look at pupils' books.
- Inspectors talked to groups of pupils and heard others in Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- The views of 15 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as discussions with some parents at the start and end of the school day, were taken into account.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, members of the governing body, subject leaders and a representative of the local authority.
- The school's improvement plan and records of teaching, achievement, behaviour and safeguarding procedures were examined.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in and out of lessons.
- Twenty six staff submitted their views via a questionnaire and inspectors also took these into account.

Inspection team

Christine Cottam, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Patrick Hargreaves	Additional Inspector
Peter Harrison	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- English Martyrs' Roman Catholic Primary is larger than the average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than that usually seen.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has gained the Healthy School status and Eco School award.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is similar to that found nationally, as is the proportion from minority ethnic groups.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always good and a greater proportion is outstanding by:
 - making sure the comments teachers write on pupils' work helps them to know more precisely how to improve and reach the next level
 - giving pupils time to improve their work after it has been marked
 - setting learning activities that help pupils to think for themselves and take more responsibility for their own learning
 - making sure higher-ability learners are given harder work in lessons
 - making sure all adults in lessons are fully involved in helping pupils make good progress.
- Improve achievement in writing so that the vast majority of pupils reach at least average standards and a good proportion do even better by:
 - teaching pupils to write in a fluent joined-up style of handwriting
 - using pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds to help them spell more accurately
 - expecting pupils to produce the same standards of writing in other subjects as they do in their English books
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their writing in other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils make good progress in lessons because teachers plan interesting activities that are usually matched well to their different abilities.
- Children start school in the nursery class with skills and knowledge that are below those usually found for their age, particularly in their literacy and language development. Good teaching throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage helps children to make good progress so that the vast majority have gained the skills they need by the time they start Year 1.
- The standards reached by the end of Year 2 have improved so that they are now above average in both reading and mathematics. Standards in writing are broadly average because not enough pupils are reaching the higher levels.
- The vast majority of pupils have made good progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Achievement in reading and mathematics is higher than in writing. There is a similar picture for pupils who are supported at school action or school action plus.
- Pupils make good progress in reading with a higher than average proportion reaching the standard set in the national phonics test at the end of Year 1. This is because all pupils are taught their letters and sounds well from an early age. Pupils enjoy reading regularly, are enthusiastic and want to do well.
- Pupils are able to organise their writing well because teachers give them interesting activities in their English lessons and sometimes make good links to other subjects. For example, in a history lesson, pupils used their knowledge from a recent museum visit as well as photographs of 'evacuees' to generate adjectives to improve the quality of their writing. This opportunity to practise writing in a meaningful way is not consistent across the school and sometimes the standard of writing is lower in other subjects.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop a fluent handwriting style or to use their knowledge of letters and sounds to spell more accurately.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who come from minority ethnic groups achieve very well with the vast majority reaching the expected standards or better by the time they leave in Year 6.
- The attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than their peers in the school. The gap is smaller than that found nationally and is closing because they make good progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection so that the vast majority is good, with a small amount that is either outstanding or requires improvement.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan interesting activities that help pupils to learn. Tasks for pupils to do on their own are usually well chosen for the different abilities. Sometimes pupils are kept together for whole-class teaching for too long. When this happens, the progress of higher-ability pupils slows because they have to listen to the teacher when they have already understood.
- Where teaching is good or better, there are high expectations of pupils and learning proceeds at a lively pace. In these lessons, all adults play an important role in helping pupils achieve through discussion and questioning. For example, in a mathematics lesson where pupils were finding fractions of quantities, the teacher worked with the higher-ability pupils with complex fractions, the teaching assistant helped some pupils to use their knowledge of tables to work with simple fractions and a small group worked independently helping each other to understand their work.
- Teachers have good strategies to find out what pupils can do. In a lesson on letters and sounds the teacher watched as pupils wrote sentences on individual whiteboards. She was able to see immediately who needed extra help so that those who were struggling were promptly helped and then made good progress.

- Where teaching requires improvement, learning activities set for pupils to work on their own are not interesting or not hard enough. Consequently, pupils do not learn as much as they could. In these lessons, teaching assistants are not deployed well enough to help pupils learn more.
- Work is always marked regularly and accurately with comments that help pupils to know how well they have done. Feedback from teachers varies in quality so that it does not always help pupils to know how to improve. There are too few opportunities for pupils to respond to guidance in order to make better progress.
- Reading and mathematics are taught well. There are marked improvements in the teaching of writing, although the teaching of handwriting and spelling requires further improvement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents say it is a lovely school with a calm learning atmosphere. All parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their child is happy, feels safe and is well looked after, a view confirmed by pupils who are very proud of their school.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons so that disruption to learning is rare. There have been no exclusions for a number of years. Adults build excellent relationships with pupils, consistently model the behaviour they expect and support those who find it more difficult to behave well so that their behaviour improves. There are effective rewards and sanctions which are consistently applied across the school. Pupils show high levels of respect for adults and other pupils. They socialise well when working in classrooms or playing together outside.
- Where teaching is consistently good then pupils are eager to learn and produce work of the highest quality. Behaviour is not outstanding because these characteristics are not yet consistent across the school.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and say that the school deals well with the rare incidents.
- Pupils have a good understanding of racial and cultural differences. They work harmoniously together regardless of their different backgrounds so that racist incidents are rare.
- Attendance has improved and is now slightly above average. This is because pupils enjoy coming to a school where they are made to feel welcome and accepted as individuals. There are good systems in place to monitor absence so that issues can be picked up quickly when necessary.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and managers share a strong determination to make sure pupils achieve as well as they can. They track pupils' progress carefully in reading, writing and mathematics. Regular meetings are held to discuss pupils who are not making enough progress so that action can be taken to help pupils catch up.
- The school has successfully improved the quality of teaching so that it is now good. This is because leaders carefully check the work of teachers by observing lessons and monitoring pupils' books. They use this information to manage the performance of teachers by setting targets, providing relevant training and making the right decisions about pay awards. This means that teachers have a clear understanding of their role which is clearly linked to the Teachers' Standards.
- The school has secured improvements to achievement and teaching since the previous inspection and this shows that it has the ability to improve still further. Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because there is still some teaching that requires improvement and achievement in writing is not yet good.
- There are good links between subjects with visits and enrichment activities so that the curriculum is interesting and meaningful. A very good example of this is a history project where pupils have visited a local museum, researched the Second World War, and related it to their own family histories through photographs and artefacts.

- Parents say that communication is good and that they are always made to feel welcome in the school. An excellent example is the 'family breakfast club', which is for parents with their children and which the headteacher always attends.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral and social awareness throughout the curriculum. An excellent understanding of their own and other cultures is developed through religious education, but also through all the activities in which pupils take part. The school is very effective in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination because it makes sure all pupils, regardless of their background, achieve well.
- The school has good systems in place that ensure all safeguarding requirements are met.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school through the services of a school achievement partner who is also a local headteacher.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has been instrumental in ensuring a strong leadership team is in place with rigorous appointment procedures in order to ensure continuity at times of staff change. Governors take their role seriously, are well known in the local community and attend training regularly. They ensure value for money by challenging budget decisions and making sure all finances, including the pupil premium funding, are used efficiently.

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	108503
Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	405176

This inspection of the school 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	462
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Thomas Laidler
Headteacher	Denise Kendall
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2010
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