

St Katherine's School

St Katherine's Lane, Snodland, Kent, ME6 5EJ

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Pupils' achievement is good. The standard of pupils' work by the end of Year 6 is well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good and as a result, pupils make good progress throughout their time in school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs usually make similar progress to others, as do pupils supported by the pupil premium funding.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning which help them to learn well and work hard.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school as shown in their above average attendance.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe. They do not fear bullying or any kind of discrimination.
- Leadership and management are good. Regular checks are made on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make so that good standards have been maintained in a period of change for the school.
- The governing body has clear plans for further improving its effectiveness.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. Lesson plans do not always make it clear what pupils of all abilities will be expected to have learned by the end of the lesson.
- Pupils do not always have enough time for writing in Years 1 to 4 and so progress is not as strong as in reading and mathematics.
- Middle managers do not have enough opportunities to observe and monitor teaching so that they can help improve it.
- The governing body and senior leadership team have yet to secure the confidence of a minority of parents in reassuring them and informing them about the changes taking place in the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 26 lessons or part lessons, including some observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors talked to pupils about their work as well as listening to some pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy and assistant headteachers, other staff with key leadership responsibilities, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, monitoring information and the safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took account of 86 responses to the on-line Parent View survey as well as four written comments and discussions with parents at the start of the day. They also scrutinised the 56 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Maura Docherty

Additional Inspector

Peter Hare

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Katherine's is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding (the pupil premium), because they are known to be eligible for free school meals, are children who are looked after by the local authority or are children of service families, is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Nursery where children attend for morning or afternoon sessions and in three Reception classes.
- The school provides a daily breakfast and after-school club.
- There is a pre-school on the school site, which is managed by a private provider and therefore is not included in this inspection.
- The headteacher took up her post in April 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to raise achievement further by:
 - ensuring that pupils in Years 1 to 4 have more time to write to improve their progress in writing to match that in reading and mathematics
 - ensuring that all teachers' lesson plans consistently have clear outcomes for learning for pupils of all abilities
 - providing opportunities for middle managers to observe teaching so they can help to improve it.
- Ensure that the headteacher and the governing body build on the good partnership with the majority of parents by communicating more effectively with all parents to reassure and inform them about changes taking place in the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Most parents agree that their children make good progress.
- Children start in the Nursery or Reception classes with skills at the expected level for their age. They make good and often outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and generally exceed the expected goals for their learning by the time they start in Year 1.
- Pupils continue to make good progress overall throughout Years 1 to 6 although it is sometimes a little uneven.
- In the 2012 assessments and tests at the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was significantly above average, as it has been for the past three years, with higher than average proportions reaching the higher Level 5 especially in mathematics and reading.
- The school's assessments and pupils' work show that this high standard is on track to be sustained. However, current progress in writing, although good, is not as strong as it is in reading and mathematics, particularly in Years 1 to 4.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs generally make similarly good progress to most pupils overall.
- All groups of pupils who benefit from the pupil premium reach similar levels of attainment to other pupils in the school in both English and mathematics as measured by their average point scores at the end of Key Stage 2. The school has taken successful steps to ensure that these pupils are supported in their academic and personal needs by providing additional support and ensuring that they are not excluded from any aspect of school life. The school is effective in ensuring equality of opportunity for pupils' learning.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 have a secure knowledge of phonics (linking letters to the sounds they make), which helps them read unfamiliar words. In the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2012, taken by the current Year 2 pupils, the proportion achieving the expected result was above that found nationally. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in reading by the end of Year 2 was considerably above that found nationally. Reading is promoted well across the school and standards are above average. Pupils read with confidence and talk with enthusiasm about books they have read and their favourite authors. Older pupils develop fluency and good comprehension skills.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers engage pupils well in their learning through fun and interesting lessons and, as a result, pupils want to do well and work hard.
- Notable strengths in teaching are good relationships between teachers and pupils and skilled questioning that successfully builds on what pupils already know, encourages their thinking skills and extends their learning.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers and pupils have a very clear idea of the purpose of the lesson and what pupils are expected to learn by the end. This was seen to good effect in writing lessons in Years 5 and 6, where pupils made very good progress in persuasive writing and writing explanations. This is not of a consistent quality in all lessons.
- In some lessons, pupils in Years 1 to 4 do not always have enough time to complete or extend their writing which can slow the progress they make.
- Children start their school life in the Early Years Foundation Stage with a positive learning experience. A broad range of opportunities is planned, for example conducting their own 'Bear Hunt' and learning about Japanese culture. These opportunities inspire children's interest and ensure their good learning.

- Teaching in reading, writing and mathematics is usually good and there are some examples of outstanding teaching. Reading is taught well and small group guided reading sessions with teachers help pupils of all ages to develop comprehension and higher-level skills. The reading areas in each class inspire and engage pupils and help develop a love of reading.
- Pupils generally know their targets and teachers mark work regularly with positive and helpful comments to help pupils know how to improve. There are some excellent opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work and understanding and provide constructive comments for improvement. This was an area to improve from the previous inspection.
- Teaching assistants provide good support in lessons that meets the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs well, particularly those supported by school action plus.
- Most parents who responded to the online survey agree that their children are taught well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most parents who responded to the online survey feel that their children are happy at school, feel safe, are well looked after and behave well. Inspection findings support this view.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and exceptionally well around the school, for example, in assemblies, and school records show that this is typical of behaviour over time. In a very few lessons, some pupils become distracted and inattentive if teaching does not fully engage or motivate them.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations for behaviour; however, the school has correctly identified the need to update its current behaviour policy to ensure consistent approaches across the school.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident and reflected in above average attendance. They are polite, friendly and have good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils say they are not aware of any bullying in school but they have a good awareness that bullying can take different forms, including cyber-bullying. They feel safe in school and confident that if any problems were to arise they could talk to staff, who would take their concerns seriously.
- They enjoy the responsibilities they are given such as members of the school council and feel they make a difference to the school, particularly to promote healthy lifestyles.
- The breakfast club provides a positive start to the day for those who attend and pupils say they enjoy being with their friends and the activities they can do if they stay to the after-school club.

The leadership and management are good

- The school has been going through a period of change since the appointment of the new headteacher who has clear vision and ambition to provide the best possible learning experiences for pupils. There has been a strong focus on the quality of teaching and learning, provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the learning environment. Accurate self-evaluation and rapid action have resulted in improvements in all of these areas where weaknesses were identified.
- New and established leaders say that recent support they are receiving, as well as training, is improving their skills effectively. Senior leaders recognise what aspects of teaching work well and what needs improving. Middle managers have not yet had opportunities to observe lessons to make a difference on the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' progress is checked thoroughly. Teachers know they are accountable for pupils' progress and that this is linked to decisions on pay and salary progression. Procedures to manage the performance of staff provide a clear evaluation of teachers' work in the classroom and determine the support and guidance required to secure improvement. Professional development and

targets for teachers are linked well to school improvement and the individual needs of teachers at different stages of their career.

- The recent introduction of a more creative approach to the subjects taught inspires and motivates imaginative learning and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Teachers make every effort to ensure that pupils' talents and interests are nurtured while also ensuring that appropriate emphasis is given to learning basic skills and providing good opportunities for pupils to use literacy, numeracy and communications skills across different subjects. Visits and visitors to the school enhance pupils' learning and help them to develop personal and social skills. Pupils are particularly appreciative of the wide range of clubs and activities that have been introduced over the past year.
- Leaders focus effectively on ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed and that there is no discrimination. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- The school has increased its efforts to work in partnership with parents including, for example, weekly newsletters, information about what children will be learning, coffee mornings and a parents' forum. However, although the majority of parents are positive about the school, a minority have concerns about the changes that have taken place. The inspectors agree that the headteacher and governing body should explore ways to reassure and ensure that all parents are well informed about changes and new initiatives.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements and ensure that pupils feel safe in school.
- The school actively seeks support and works well with the local authority, which provides good support especially in focusing on successful teaching and the improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

■ **The governance of the school:**

The governing body has a new Chair who is committed to supporting the school and has clear plans in place to secure the governing body's future effectiveness in holding the school to account for its performance. There is a renewed determination to challenge the school and governors have correctly identified training needs to achieve this. There is a good awareness of the school's strengths and areas to improve and how the school's standards compare with those of other schools nationally. There is a good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school. Teachers' performance is checked and closely linked to salary progression. There is a good knowledge of the use and impact of the additional funding of the pupil premium and agreement on how it is spent; for example, to provide additional support in groups, building the Learning Zone and providing the Lego Club. The governing body meets its statutory requirements including for safeguarding.

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	118312
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	403345

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	597
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Edgar
Headteacher	Sharon Alexander
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2008
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