

# Richard de Clare Community Primary School

Parsonage Street, Halstead, CO9 2JT

## Inspection dates

20–21 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Senior leaders and governors have not set sufficiently demanding targets to make sure that teaching is consistently good in all classes. Consequently, pupils do not make rapid progress and reach the standards expected for their ages.
- Governors have not challenged as they should and so the school's effectiveness has declined since the previous inspection.
- Work set for pupils in some classes is too easy or repeats what they can already do. This restricts the progress pupils make. In some lessons, learning is not sufficiently active to motivate pupils to try their best.
- The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders are neither sufficiently clear nor understood, so the senior leadership team is not as effective as it needs to be.
- Teaching in Years 1 and 2 does not build quickly enough on what children coming from the Reception classes already know and are able to do.
- The progress that pupils make across Years 3 to 5 has been inadequate because the pace of learning has been too slow, leaving too much to be done in Year 6.
- Not all marking gives pupils a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.

### The school has the following strengths

- Strong leadership this year from the headteacher has ensured that systems which hold teachers to account for their performance, and that of their pupils, are contributing to improving the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils.
- Pupils get off to a good start in the Reception classes.
- Behaviour in and around the school is good and sometimes it is exemplary.
- Attendance is consistently above average and pupils enjoy coming to school.
- Teaching in Year 6 is good, so pupils make rapid progress in their final year.
- Procedures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils are good.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons, two of which were seen together with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed pupils moving around the school, in the dining room and at break and lunchtimes. They listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with pupils including members of the school council, senior leaders including subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 47 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents); a large number of parents' spoken views, gathered during sports day activities, and written comments. Inspectors also took account of the 55 staff questionnaires and the 275 responses to the school's own most recent parent questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked closely at a range of documentation, including the school's data about the progress of pupils, leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, improvement plans, safeguarding policies and records relating to teachers' performance.

## Inspection team

Nichola Perry, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Edwin Powell	Additional Inspector
Janet Watson	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding (additional money given to schools to help certain groups, which in this school applies to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals) is lower than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is higher than average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school did not meet the government's floor standards in 2012, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2012.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that good teaching becomes the norm, so as to raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, by ensuring that:
  - all teachers have a better understanding of how well pupils are performing in all subjects and set work for pupils that is demanding and which does not repeat what the pupils can already do
  - pupils produce a greater volume of work in the time available, across a range of subjects, but particularly in writing
  - marking consistently helps pupils reflect on how well they are doing and pupils are given sufficient and frequent opportunities in all classes to act on teachers' comments so that they begin to take on greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Improve the quality of leadership at all levels, including governance, so that all leaders contribute fully to whole-school improvement, by:
  - reviewing the structure, roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team and ensuring that individual accountability is understood by all
  - ensuring that the governing body carries out an in-depth evaluation of its skills and effectiveness, resulting in a tailor-made training package designed to help governors to evaluate information provided and hold the school to account more robustly.
- Ensure that senior leaders all have the necessary skills so that they can carry out their monitoring roles with greater rigour, by:
  - providing appropriate training which improves subject leaders' understanding of their role in monitoring the quality of teaching, pupils' rate of progress and attainment in their subjects
  - providing more opportunities for all leaders to regularly check the quality of teaching, with the expectation that this leads to a higher proportion of teaching which is consistently good or better
  - checking more closely both the quality and consistency of teachers' marking in all classes so as to provide pupils with more accurate information about their performance and help them to improve more rapidly.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils have not made rapid progress year on year and reached at least the standards expected for their ages. Work set for pupils in some classes is too easy or repeats what they can already do. Although better this year, progress for pupils in Years 1 and 2 has been inadequate because information about the achievement of children in the Reception classes has not been used to ensure that they build on the good start they have in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Progress made by pupils across Years 3 to 5 has been inadequate because the pace of learning has been too slow. This means that pupils in Year 6 have had to catch up on work they should have done earlier.
- Children in the Reception classes, most of whom start school with lower levels of knowledge and skills for their age, especially in language and communication, are taught well. They are prepared effectively for more structured learning in Year 1. They are given stimulating things to do which place strong emphasis on speaking and listening, solving problems and thinking for themselves. This is helping them to develop good personal and social skills as well as fostering their delight of learning.
- The very recent introduction of the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is helping pupils develop their reading skills. However, pupils heard reading during the inspection are not yet making good use of these skills when attempting to read unfamiliar words, instead relying on picture clues and prompts from adults. Older pupils are developing into more confident, accurate and fluent readers who are becoming increasingly fond of reading as they improve their skills.
- Pupils in Year 2 are making significantly better progress in reading so that their attainment in reading is now average. Whilst there has been some improvement in writing for these pupils, attainment in mathematics has declined further and both subjects are below average. Although not yet consistent, there is clear evidence of some good progress this year in all three subjects in Years 3 to 5. Consistently effective teaching in Year 6 has now resulted in good progress and average attainment in English and mathematics.
- There are clear signs that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising in most year groups. Improvements in teaching and more accurate assessment are leading to better learning for more pupils. This is resulting in more pupils than in recent years making nationally expected progress for their age. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make expected progress but the gap between their attainment and that of their classmates remains far too wide.
- Improvements in planning and the introduction of more structured learning are contributing well to improvement as pupils progress through the school. Because teachers need to spend less time on helping the older pupils to catch up, there is now a greater emphasis on encouraging pupils to apply and extend their learning. This means that pupils are now beginning to work at a higher level than in the past.
- Work in books shows that pupils are now producing writing of a higher standard which demonstrates their growing confidence and improving use of basic skills. Better progress in developing numeracy skills is enabling pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems, including those in real-life situations. Pupils make good progress in their language and communication skills because lessons place strong emphasis on this element of their learning.

- Progress for pupils supported through the pupil premium has accelerated because this additional funding is used effectively to provide a wide range of additional support and activities. Current school data show the gap between their attainment and that of other groups in reading, writing and mathematics is starting to reduce. In the 2012 Year 6 tests, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals were on average two terms behind their classmates in English but made better progress. In mathematics, they were also in the region of two terms behind but made slower progress.

### **The quality of teaching**

### **requires improvement**

- There is not enough good teaching. Teachers do not consistently actively engage pupils in the lessons to motivate them to try their best. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 does not build quickly enough on what children already know and are able to do.
- When teachers mark pupils' work they do not always give clear guidance on what pupils need to do to improve. Teachers do not yet take a consistent approach to marking across the school. Presentation and handwriting in pupils' books are adequate, but teachers' expectations are still variable and not high enough in all classes. Some good examples of pupils amending, improving and marking their own work show that they are taking greater responsibility for their own learning and progress.
- Higher expectations of teachers' performance have resulted in improvements in teaching but inspectors saw no examples of outstanding teaching. Teachers mostly plan meaningful and motivating work which helps pupils learn how to apply their knowledge to learning.
- In some lessons, teachers amend their planning and refocus their teaching when it is clear that some pupils find the work too easy. These teachers have high expectations that pupils will produce a reasonable amount of work of a good standard in the time available. This not yet consistent in all classes.
- Lesson observations and pupils' books show that teachers are increasing opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills. Additional adults, employed to support vulnerable pupils or those who find learning difficult, use questioning and discussion skilfully so that these pupils make similar progress to their classmates.
- Teachers are becoming increasingly able at supporting and prompting pupils to think hard and solve problems so that they achieve well. Pupils from an early age show a good understanding of how to seek help independently for their learning by searching for clues on walls around the classroom, finding books or other resources which might help them, or talking to a partner.
- Teachers increasingly make links between learning in one subject and how this is relevant to learning in other subjects and everyday situations. In this respect, pupils' books show some good examples of writing for a range of different purposes and in other subjects, such as religious education or history. However, this is not yet sufficiently well developed to ensure that pupils are doing as much writing as they should be across all subjects.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **are good**

- Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons and around the school are good and sometimes exemplary. Teachers manage any inappropriate behaviour well so that disruption to learning is rare. Pupils are aware of the consequences of their actions and speak confidently

about rewards and sanctions used by the school.

- Pupils' relationships throughout the school are good. They work particularly well together, whether in pairs, small groups or as a whole class. They work constructively together and particularly enjoy lessons where they can engage in group activities. They are considerate towards each other and genuinely accept differences, particularly towards pupils who experience difficulties with their emotional and social development.
- Pupils say the behaviour seen during the inspection is typical. They report that pupils get on well with each other and consider the playground to be well supervised. They have trust in the adults to help them if a problem should occur.
- Pupils understand that their contributions are valued by their teachers, which is why they feel safe to 'have a try'. They say they feel they are allowed to make mistakes. This results in even the youngest pupils participating confidently in discussions and actively seeking to engage in conversation, including with visitors. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn, which is why attendance is consistently above average.
- Pupils feel very safe and their parents agree. They talk knowledgeably about the different forms of bullying, including inappropriate use of language towards different groups. Pupils understand exactly what action to take should this occur. They recognise very well what is and is not bullying. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.
- Strong support for all pupils helps them to feel safe and develop into happy members of the school community. A wide range of additional support, including good links with external agencies, is provided for pupils and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. This ensures that pupils joining the school, sometimes from other settings where they have not had a positive experience, settle quickly and are able to blend in with the other pupils.

## **The leadership and management**

## **requires improvement**

- The senior leadership team is currently not as effective as it needs to be so that the bulk of the work has fallen on the headteacher. Not all of those with leadership responsibilities have a full understanding of their roles. The role of the deputy headteacher is now developing, so that the deputy headteacher is increasingly providing necessary support in monitoring and planning for improvement.
- Leadership of English and mathematics is making some progress in helping staff to bring about improvement but, as yet, leaders have not established a comprehensive overview of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress. As a result, teaching has not improved rapidly enough, pupils' progress over time has been restricted and attainment has declined since the previous inspection.
- Leaders have not ensured that school policies are consistently followed, including those for teachers' marking.
- Regular meetings with teachers now track pupils' progress and set more precise targets for improvement. These meetings and targets are the first steps in moving towards procedures aimed at providing greater rigour in the future so that pupils make faster progress. Teachers are, as a result, beginning to develop a better understanding of how well their pupils are performing.

- The new headteacher has made a very good start in refocusing the school on new beginnings. She has successfully engaged governors, staff and pupils so that they are committed to high aspirations for the future with a commitment to work together to achieve their goals. She has had to work extremely hard with some considerable resistance from a minority of staff. Parents are supportive and pleased with what the school provides for their children.
- Planning which guides the school towards improvement is helping staff at all levels to have a more accurate understanding of the successful aspects of their work and those requiring further action. This element of the school's work is ensuring that governors and other school leaders can make more accurate judgements on how well the school is performing and what needs to be done next.
- Procedures to manage staff performance have been revised so that they are more rigorous in holding staff to account for improving their teaching and the performance of their pupils. This, supported by a range of relevant training, has already led to improved teaching across the school.
- Subjects are taught through 'inspire' days and topics, and displays around the school reflect the varied work provided for pupils. Some good links are made between different subjects so that pupils can see the relevance of what they are learning but this is not yet consistent across the school. The good range of visits, visitors and links with the local and wider communities enrich pupils' learning and personal development well and ensure that their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is promoted well.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective and is contributing well to whole-school improvement by ensuring that children make a good start to their learning.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted appropriately and discrimination of any kind is addressed quickly and effectively. The pupil premium funding is used creatively to support eligible pupils and their families. Their rate of progress is improving because they are benefitting from the wide range of extra adult support and activities.
- The local authority was unaware of the school's decline since the previous inspection until identified by the new headteacher. Since then, it has recognised the extent of the situation and been proactive in providing wide-ranging and plentiful support to aid improvement.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has failed to provide adequate challenge to the school on its performance and, as a result, the school's effectiveness has declined since the previous inspection. The Chair of the Governing Body has been quick to accept this and is determined that the school will recover quickly. During the past year, governors' knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses have improved considerably so that it is now adequate. For example, the governors recognise the need to restructure the senior leadership team to increase its effectiveness. Along with the headteacher's reports, recent local authority reviews have focused governors' attention on there being too much teaching that requires improvement or is inadequate, resulting in lack of progress made by pupils year-on-year. Governors are now fully aware of the need for rapid improvement and increased challenge on the school's performance. Governors demonstrate a clear understanding of how the pupil premium is used to employ additional staff and they check its impact on pupils' progress. They ensure efficient budget management by the office manager so that funding is focused well on current priorities for improvement, including use of funds to reward good teaching. Governors are now appropriately involved in actions taken to manage any underperformance and are committed to ensuring the full support of all staff for the headteacher and the need for

improvement. Governors make sure that current national requirements for safeguarding pupils are met.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114765
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	411828

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	417
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Simon Green
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Donnelly
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 Jan 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01787 472153
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