

St Catherine's RC VA Primary School

Pymore Road, Bridport, DT6 3TR

Inspection dates 19–20 June 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.

- All groups of pupils achieve well because teaching is good, expectations are high and lessons are interesting and engaging.
- Almost all pupils behave well in and out of lessons. They are keen to learn and respond quickly to teachers' requests.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, have very high aspirations for the school and, under the very able headteacher, work well together to achieve these.
- Highly effective systems, including those for behaviour management, assessments and monitoring, are in place. However, these have not yet had sufficient time to refine all aspects of teaching or yield achievement better than good.
- Morale is high and teamwork is strong. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through daily acts of collective worship, lessons and outdoor work and play.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teaching is good rather than outstanding. Strengths are not yet consistent throughout the school and not enough teaching is outstanding.
- Slight weaknesses in the effectiveness of marking, the practical organisation of pupils and the use of time for learning slightly slow progress, because pupils are not always clear of what to do in tasks or what to do when they have completed them. Consequently achievement is good but not outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 12 lessons or other educational activities, including sports day and acts of collective worship, taught by nine teachers. Six of these observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with children, governors, two representatives from the local authority, the parish priest, leaders, teachers and other staff.
- The inspector considered the views of parents and carers from 15 online responses to the Parent View questionnaire, a telephone call and informal discussions.
- They considered 30 responses to the staff questionnaire and the views of children, through both informal and pre-arranged discussions.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including: the school's information on pupils' current progress, pupils' work, leaders' reports on lesson observations, the school's development plan, other planning and monitoring documents, documents relating to safeguarding and records of behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Jo Curd, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Catherine's RC VA Primary School is smaller than most primary schools. It is situated on the edge of the small town of Bridport.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional money for specific groups of pupils, in this case those known to be eligible for free school meals) is smaller than in most schools.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, supported through school action, is above that in most other schools. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Over the past eight years, there have been considerable changes of staff, including leadership and management.
- The current headteacher started as acting headteacher in September 2010. She took up the permanent position in March 2011. She is the first permanent headteacher since 2007.
- The number of pupils on roll has steadily increased over recent years.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - marking is sufficiently detailed and clearly shows all pupils how to progress in learning, including their basic skills such as spelling
 - practical details, such as the way groups are organised, fully enhance learning
 - all pupils are able to make the very most of time in lessons, because they always understand what to do in activities and what to go on to when they have finished.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- All groups of pupils achieve well. Children start in the Reception class with a very wide range of knowledge, skills and understanding. Overall these are broadly in line with national expectations for this age. By the end of Year 6 attainment is generally above the national average.
- In 2012, results from national tests show a dip in attainment and progress especially in mathematics. This is predominantly because six out of the 18 pupils, most of whom were boys with special educational needs, did not join the school until very late in Key Stage 2 and arrived with standards far lower than usual for their age. Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's own tracking data show that current pupils are on track to attain above average standards generally.
- A high proportion of pupils reach levels which are above the national average. This year reliable tracking indicates that almost half the pupils will reach higher Level 5s in English and mathematics and up to a quarter will reach the even higher Level 6 in mathematics.
- Some progress is very rapid. For example, children in the Reception class rapidly progressed in confidence, independence, creative and literacy skills as they chose activities from a very wide range. They had opportunities to work indoors or out and successfully developed skills of sharing through excitedly and independently making up a story about pirates, dressing up and creating a treasure map together.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because they are identified early, included well in lessons and given well-focused support.
- More-able pupils achieve well because all staff have high expectations for all the pupils, have good subject knowledge and teach well.
- Although numbers are very small, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who have English as an additional language progress particularly well because activities are relevant, open ended and challenging. Staff have high expectations for all and parents and carers are engaged well.
- Pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium achieve well. Systems to support learning and emotional support are strong and any additional needs are quickly identified and supported. In 2012 their progress was slightly quicker than that of those not known to be eligible for the pupil premium. Although attainment was a term and a half behind in mathematics it was half a term ahead in English and the gap between these pupils and others is closing.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers make lessons interesting and enjoyable. Pupils are positive about their learning, as one pupil said, 'Maths at St Catherine's is great fun. We play lots of games which make learning exciting.'
- Teaching assistants are experienced and skilled. They are deployed well to help pupils' learning and emotional development, especially helping pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, including those known to be eligible for the pupil premium.
- Teachers combine subjects well in lessons in interesting and engaging ways. For example, in a Year 6 class, pupils developed skills in literacy, science and French through making books in both English and French languages about the growth of seeds. In another class, pupils extended their understanding of literacy, geography and cultural diversity through researching stories from other countries. This helps achievement across a range of subjects and successfully enhances pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Reading is effectively incorporated into a wide range of lessons. Pupils enjoy reading and read a wide range of books for information and pleasure. Outcomes for the phonics (linking letters with the sounds they make) screening check for six-year-olds were broadly in line with the national average in 2012 and have improved significantly this year.

- Teachers explain tasks clearly and ask pupils to tell them if they do not understand. Despite this, progress is occasionally slowed because a very few pupils still do not understand the tasks they are given and this is not always picked up and addressed quickly enough by the teachers. Short amounts of time are also wasted at the end of activities because pupils do not always know what they should go on to and have to wait until they are told.
- Teachers praise, guide and correct pupils' learning well. They are very positive and encouraging, but also guide and correct pupils where necessary. They successfully alter activities and explanations within and between lessons accordingly. Occasionally, their observations and comments are not quite detailed enough, as they do not identify or address some aspects effectively, notably basic skills such as spelling. Consequently achievement is good rather than outstanding.
- Teachers use their frequent, detailed and robust assessments of pupils well to identify and address any difficulties or slower progress. Staff know pupils well and have high expectations for them all. This successfully drives equal opportunities and serves to combat discrimination.
- Very occasionally progress is slightly slowed because teachers' practical organisation does not fully enhance learning. For example, they do not always make full use of space and place separately taught groups too closely together.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The vast majority of pupils behave well in and out of lessons. They are keen to learn and respond quickly to teachers' requests.
- The few pupils with challenging behaviour are managed well and disruptions are very rare. Adults apply rewards and sanctions for behaviour consistently and pupils respond well to this.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well. The school has a very clear spiritual foundation and is also highly inclusive. Pupils learn to be quiet and reflective in daily acts of worship, develop their sense of awe and wonder as they undertake interesting activities and play exuberantly outside, and learn about a range of cultures and faiths.
- Pupils are positive about, and proud of, their school. One older pupil, voicing the views of most, said, 'We have many amazing facilities and are really grateful that we have loads of outside space for play.'
- Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including name calling, physical and cyber bullying. While several pupils report that there are some occasions of bullying, they feel safe as they clearly know what to do when these occur and are confident that staff will quickly act to address and remedy these.
- Pupils develop independence, confidence and responsibility. Their voice and opinions are welcomed and used in school development. For example, they interview new staff and contribute to the school environment through the gardening club and looking after playground equipment.
- Pupils successfully extend their health, strength and safety, as they swim in the school pool at least twice a week in the spring and summer.

The leadership and management are good

- Following a lengthy period of turbulence and uncertainty in the school, the very able new headteacher has rapidly clarified and shared her strong vision, galvanised staff and introduced and strengthened a range of effective systems.
- Systems for improving teaching, managing behaviour, assessing pupils' achievement and monitoring all aspects of the school are highly effective. However, these have not yet had time to drive achievement and teaching above good.
- Staff responses through discussion and the inspection questionnaire were unanimously positive,

especially about leaders and managers. One member of staff, reflecting the views of others, said, 'I believe the greatest strength of our school is its management team and the constant and on-going support they provide', while another said, 'The head is inspirational. She is supportive but always moving us forward. There is a fabulous team working here.'

- Almost all parents and carers who responded during the inspection, or to the very recent school survey, are very positive about the school. A very small minority have concerns about care and bullying. The inspector identified that a very small number of pupils have persistently challenging behaviour, but this is managed well and behaviour and safety are good.
- Officers from the local authority have effectively helped the school to improve through termly appraisals and support to refine leaders' observations of teaching.
- Capacity for further improvement is outstanding because developments over the past two years have been particularly rapid. Highly effective systems are fully in place, leaders are experienced, astute and increasingly effective and the school community, including pupils, parents, carers and staff, is very keen to implement the school's clear vision and priorities.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is effective. Governors are experienced, well trained and knowledgeable. Their statutory duties, including those for safeguarding, are met. They know the quality of teaching and how well children are achieving compared with other pupils nationally, through regular visits, discussions and reports. They support and challenge leaders and are fully involved in school improvement, building on strengths and helping leaders within the school tackle any underperformance. Governors have a clear approach to financial management and oversee budgets wisely, including the use of the pupil premium. They take responsibility for managing the performance of staff and how the school rewards them, linking financial reward closely to performance and outcomes.

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	113823
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	413082

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ethna Jenkins
Headteacher	Frances Guppy
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2008
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