

St Bartholomew's Catholic Primary School

Sycamore Drive, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7AY

Inspection dates 27–28 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The vast majority of teaching across the school is good with examples where learning in lessons is outstanding.
- All pupils, including the most able, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school so that by the end of Year 6 a high percentage reach standards that are above the national averages in English and mathematics.
- Strong leadership from the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders has continued to maintain high standards in English and mathematics across the school since the last inspection.
- The needs of all the pupils are quickly identified, especially pupils with special educational needs. They are supported well and make good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are polite and friendly in a warm atmosphere where relationships are strong. Pupils' attitude to their learning is excellent, they are very eager to learn and settle quickly to their learning.
- Governors know the school well. They are aware of its strengths and provide a good balance to support and challenge.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in writing is not as strong as in reading and mathematics.
- There is some inconsistency in teachers' approach to marking which limits its effectiveness

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons; some were joint observations carried out with the headteacher.
- Inspectors also carried out a series of short visits to other lessons across the school, observed assembly and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle leaders, and a representative of the local authority.
- A range of books and documentation were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- There were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), but previous questionnaires were taken into consideration, and parents and carers spoken to in the playground.

Inspection team

Gillian Bosschaert, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Simon Hughes

Additional Inspector

Teresa Davies

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action and school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is higher than the average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is below the national average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and pupils from armed forces families.
- There is a before-school 'Early Birds' club and a phonics club.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further close the gap between reading and writing by providing further opportunities to write and allowing more time for independent learning.
- Ensure consistency in teachers' marking and continue to develop marking as a tool for pupil improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those expected for their age, especially in communication and language. Excellent teaching and care for their welfare make them feel secure so they progress very well. They make exceptional progress and enter Key Stage 1 at levels expected for their age.
- Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the school. However, while writing is still above the national averages, attainment and progress remains slightly weaker than reading and mathematics. Attainment has steadily risen year-on-year in English and mathematics. School information on pupils' progress shows that the current Year 6 are on course to meet challenging targets and continue this rising trend in attainment.
- Reading is a focus of the school. Most pupils enjoy reading, and read with confidence and accuracy expected of their age. Unfamiliar words are tackled by using the sounds letters make (phonics). They are able to talk excitedly about their books and declare their fondness for reading at home, especially the use of the new software program, which is particularly motivating boys.
- Developing pupils' speaking and listening skills is also a focus for all teachers. Pupils are able to explain well what they are doing. This is particularly apparent in the upper school when pupils mark each other's work. This is done with great solemnity and maturity because pupils take this very seriously.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs benefit from good support provided by well-trained teaching assistants. They make good progress and their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is better than similar pupils nationally.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to support pupils in a variety of ways. The implementation of speech and language programmes, some one-to-one tuition as well as other intervention packages, ensure that these pupils make good progress and reach the same levels as their peers, which are higher than the national averages in English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The vast majority of teaching is good with examples of where learning in lessons is outstanding. Checks on the quality of teaching and a recent whole-school review reflect this. There is a strong commitment within the staff to constantly improve. They have high expectations of the pupils and of themselves.
- Pupils respond very well to their teachers, they work hard and show excellent application to their learning, which can be readily identified in the well-presented, neat work seen in their books. However, teachers do not always allow enough time for independent learning which would accelerate progress further, especially when writing.
- Marking is not yet consistent across the school. In the best examples, marking is diagnostic and formative, which moves pupils on to the next steps in their learning. Pupils have opportunities to mark their own and other's work and respond to comments made by their teachers. However, this is not always the case in every class.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to capture pupils' interest well. Planning and preparation are a strength of teaching. Pupils are clear of their task and engage quickly. They are highly motivated because teachers make learning fun; they want to please their teachers so work hard. Most lessons are at a brisk pace so pupils learn quickly.
- In the best lessons, challenge was appropriate and caused accelerated learning. For example, in a Year 6 class mathematics lesson on fractions, a pupil modelled the work at the interactive whiteboards as a 'Maths Wizard in action'. This was immediately followed up by the teachers who challenged other pupils to work on examples of fractions using word problems extending the learning. In a guided reading session in the Reception class, children were having great fun

putting real and nonsense words into boxes. They were using their knowledge of sounds that letters make and laughing spontaneously at the nonsense words.

- Teachers model good vocabulary, especially in mathematics. The extensive use of good questioning skills to develop pupils' thinking and deepen understanding has ensured that pupils enjoy opportunities to talk to a partner and relish the opportunities to talk to an adult, which makes a valuable contribution to their development. Teaching assistants support pupils extremely well and help to promote good achievement.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a real strength of the school. Opportunities to sing, dance, make music and appreciate poetry and stories are plentiful. They also gain considerable insight into understanding the customs and beliefs of others.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are highly motivated and settle to learning quickly. Behaviour in and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are very proud of their school and talk enthusiastically about their achievements. They readily explain they 'love coming to school because lessons are fun and interesting' and they 'learn about lots of things'.
- They fully understand the school's systems of sanctions and rewards, and express their excitement about getting to the top of the 'behaviour ladder' as the reward this term is ice cream on the field.
- The school is a calm and orderly place to be, and the pupils and staff enjoy being there. Pupils say that they are very happy at school, and that they feel safe and bullying is very rare. A recent parental questionnaire confirms the vast majority of parents and carers feel the same. Attendance is above average.
- Pupils display a great deal of consideration for each other and are very polite to adults and visitors. Standing aside to let one pass or rushing to open doors is part of daily life. Pupils understand keeping safe and explain its application in lessons, for example when carrying objects or needing to stretch in physical education, or when using the computer and internet.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders share a common vision for the school. They are proactive and consistently communicate high expectations and ambition, which cascades to all staff, who are highly motivated to be the best they can be. They are very much a team.
- Leaders are passionate about raising standards of achievement in literacy and numeracy, and work very hard to drive standards forward. Teachers are fully aware that they have a part to play and are fully accountable for the progress their pupils make. There is a strong emphasis on professional training and development, and there is a clear link to teachers' pay and career progression. Recently, good practice has been shared to help improve writing and show impact on progress. This is beginning to have an impact but has yet to secure the same levels of progress and attainment in writing as is seen in reading and mathematics. Marking has been a priority and is developing well. However, leaders have yet to be successful in ensuring consistency across the school.
- Pupils' learning is greatly enriched by teaching that links a number of subjects together. For example, the school is linked to a school in Sierra Leone and work on Africa involves pupils' understanding of religious artefacts, homes, mountains, rivers, music and even latrines. Pupils have raised money by organising a 'readathon' to help improve this facility for the African pupils. 'Family learning' topics for holidays motivate pupils to deepen their understanding beyond the taught curriculum and give opportunities to write from real experiences. A recent school survey showed that every pupil joins some form of club, whether it is art, sport, dance, phonics or 'Early Bird' learning which takes place before school daily. This all promotes equality of opportunity well.

- Pupil premium funding is allocated effectively to focus on raising standards in English and mathematics for eligible pupils. Some of the funding is also spent on specialist teaching, for example music and counselling. Senior leaders constantly check the suitability of the additional support to ensure that it has the desired impact in accelerating pupils' progress and that there is no discrimination.
- The school has close relationships with its parents and carers which extend beyond what is expected of a school as pupils' and families' welfare is very important to the headteacher and his staff. They appreciate the regular information they receive in newsletters and pupil reports. There are ample opportunities for meetings to discuss their pupils' progress and agree individual targets with class teachers. Parents and carers are very happy with the school.
- The local authority offers light-touch support and the School Improvement Partner has supported senior leaders during the last year on ensuring that school information on pupils' progress is robust and accurate. This has been very effective, and they are able to offer data in any form and for any group of pupils quickly and efficiently, and discuss the information in detail.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are very committed to the school and ensure that pupils are safe and enjoy their learning. They visit the school frequently and are clear about how well the school is performing in relation to schools nationally. Leaders with whole-school responsibility present information about their subject regularly to the governing body. This helps governors understand the impact this is having on school attainment and allows them the opportunity to challenge in a supportive way. Governors undertake regular training to enable them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities fully. They understand the links between performance and pay progression, and actively seek the advice and support of the School Improvement Partner to assist setting challenging targets for staff and pupils. Finances are secure and safeguarding requirements 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

Unique reference number	118860
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	403368

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Austin
Headteacher	Kevin McPartland
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2008
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