

St Pius X RC Primary School

Amersham Road, Park End, Middlesbrough, TS3 7HD

Inspection dates 3–4 July 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.

- The recent change of headteacher has been seamless. The acting headteacher's strong drive and passion have ensured that staff continue to feel valued. Morale is high. As a result, the school continues to improve.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is average overall and above average in English. Those with special educational needs do as well as their classmates, because they are given the right sort of help.
- Teaching is good and often outstanding. It is led and managed well, with staff expertise and confidence improving all the time.
- The school enjoys the full confidence and trust of parents.
- Pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around school is exemplary and their attendance is improving. They feel safe and express confidence that adults are always on hand to turn to if they have any worries.
- The interesting range of curriculum experiences meets pupils' varied needs extremely well. The excellent spiritual, moral and social teaching supports pupils' personal development exceptionally well.
- High quality care and effective specialist support ensure that pupils of all backgrounds, including the potentially vulnerable, can thrive and achieve well.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of school performance and know exactly what needs to be done to sustain a consistent pattern of high achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' progress and achievement in mathematics are not as consistently good as they are in English. Opportunities are occasionally missed for pupils to practise their numeracy skills in all subjects.
- In a few lessons, particularly in mathematics, the teaching does not always inspire pupils' thinking and stretch their understanding enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons of which three were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons, and walks around the school site, to check the quality of what is provided for pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils, nine parents, members of the governing body, school staff, including senior leaders and those with responsibilities such as the leadership of key stages and subjects, and the local authority senior adviser.
- Inspectors took account of the 13 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and examined a range of documentation including the school's own records of pupils' current progress, records from the observation of lessons, pupils' books and the improvement planning. Records relating to behaviour, complaints and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding were also taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patrick Hargreaves

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Pius X is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average.
- A well-above average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after.)
- Most pupils are from White British communities with a significantly lower than average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. None are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The school met the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school extends its services in that it provides a breakfast-club each day.
- The acting headteacher has been in post for one term.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils make faster progress and achieve higher standards in mathematics by:
 - increasing teachers' expertise in mathematics and raising their expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - making certain that stimulating, thought-provoking teaching methods enable pupils to think hard for themselves and ensuring that tasks are set at the correct level of demand and challenge
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills to problem-solving scenarios in all subjects
 - providing well-defined written help in books so that pupils are in no doubt about what they need to do to improve, and making certain that they respond to this advice.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When children start school in the Nursery their skills and knowledge are generally well below those typical for their age. Their social, emotional, speech and language skills are often underdeveloped. They get off to a flying start, quickly developing early confidence, self-control and independence so that, by the time they join Year 1, all are working towards the goals expected for their age.
- Pupils' skills are successfully added to in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, although progress is faster in reading and writing than in mathematics.
- At the end of Year 6, standards in English are above average and they are broadly average in mathematics. The school's concerted actions are improving reading and writing skills but, while standards in mathematics are rising, they are not yet high enough.
- The effective teaching of blending letters and sounds together to form words is leading to significant improvements in early reading, especially in pupils' fluency and enjoyment of reading. At age six, skills are below average but improving quickly. Older pupils in Year 6, especially the girls, are increasingly confident and enthusiastic when describing their current reading, for example, reading about the emotions and feelings expressed in the Jacqueline Wilson series of novels.
- Pupils' writing skills are above average because they have a broad range of interesting opportunities to write imaginatively, for example, about a friendly, flying dragon, or for a specific purpose. Classrooms and corridors provide rich and thought-provoking environments which spark creative and imaginative writing.
- The requirements of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs are quickly pinpointed. This leads to the provision of additional support that is carefully tailored to meet their individual needs. Rigorous checking in lessons ensures that any slips or misunderstandings are quickly addressed. Consequently, the progress of these pupils is similar to that of their classmates. Some individuals make rapid progress which is helping them to close any gaps in their learning and catch up with their peers.
- The gap in performance between those pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and pupils nationally has been eliminated. This is the result of well-targeted and effectively delivered lessons and support programmes which underpin the school's effective promotion of equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and often outstanding. Previous weaknesses in teaching, particularly in the accuracy of assessment at the end of Key Stage 1, have been eradicated. One third of the teaching in lessons observed was outstanding because stimulating and interesting activities, especially in English, were thought-provoking and encouraged high achievement. Nevertheless, these highly effective methods are not always used consistently by all teachers in mathematics lessons.
- The relationship between staff and pupils is excellent. Classrooms are calm, busy, well-ordered and inspiring learning environments where pupils of all ages can thrive.
- Where teaching is most effective:
 - teachers use pupil information to shape activities to match each pupil's ability and interests closely
 - questioning is used especially well to stretch pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding
 - frequent checks are made to address pupils' mix-ups or confusions
 - pupils are actively involved in their learning and are expected to discuss and reflect on their thinking, ideas and decisions.

- In those lessons where teaching requires improvement:
 - tasks are not always matched closely enough to the individual needs of pupils
 - expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are not high enough
 - opportunities to create interest and practise skills in purposeful activities are missed
 - questioning does not always follow pupils' thinking and test out their understanding enough.
- Teaching assistants are often highly effective, using successful methods to help pupils who have fallen behind. Excellent use is made of specialist support, such as the parent support assistant and speech therapists, to accelerate individuals' progress in acquiring essential skills.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults provide high quality care and support in rich, welcoming and motivating environments. This helps children to explore, investigate and pursue their curiosity. Consequently, children settle rapidly to become confident and self-assured, finding things out for themselves.
- The quality of marking is good. Pupils are informed about how well they have done and their efforts are celebrated, especially in English. Teachers consistently make clear how pupils could improve their work, although this is less well embedded in mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' exemplary behaviour in classrooms and at social times creates a safe, happy and friendly school atmosphere. All parents agree. Staff provide excellent role models. As a result, pupils are very aware of the boundaries that are set for their conduct.
- Pupils play happily and work really well together because they are considerate and kind. They are thoughtful and polite when addressing adults and visitors to the school. They take great pride in their role supporting younger children, such as when topping up the Nursery fridge with fresh milk cartons every morning. The school provides a very caring and highly supportive atmosphere in which all pupils are valued.
- Each morning the breakfast-club provides a happy and active start to the day. Conversations with pupils reveal that they are knowledgeable about the different forms of bullying, including by text, use of the internet and verbal and physical intimidation. They are confident that if bullying occurred it would be dealt with extremely firmly.
- Discussions with parents verify that this is the case and the school's behaviour, racist and complaint logs confirm that bullying is rare and there is very little disruption in lessons.
- The school has taken decisive action to improve attendance. Routines to manage attendance are very effective. In the last term there has been a significant reduction in persistent absence which is now broadly in line with the national average.

The leadership and management are good

- The acting headteacher provides crystal-clear direction for staff and has tackled the areas identified, by school and local authority quality checks, as being in need of improvement. In the last term, attendance has improved, the quality of teaching been strengthened even more, progress rates have quickened and achievement has been boosted. As a result, the school is improving at an ever faster rate.
- Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths because self-evaluation is accurate. School development planning provides a fitting mechanism through which the school's high aspirations can be realised.
- Judgements of the quality of teaching and classroom support are accurate. Lessons are frequently checked and helpful guidance and constructive support given to staff. Despite this, methods that inspire pupils' thinking and stretch their understanding are not consistently embedded in mathematics.
- The curriculum provides a broad range of interesting activities, thoughtfully tailored to meet the

abilities, needs and talents of pupils. Themes often link subjects together imaginatively to capture and hold pupils' interest effectively, for example, using the Vera Lynn song 'Till we meet again' to delve into the plight of child evacuees in the Second World War. The promotion of pupils' personal development is extremely well organised. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects.

- Leaders and managers at all levels work well together and there is a strong sense of teamwork. Subject leaders are increasingly effective as their confidence and expertise grow.
- The arrangement to ensure equality of opportunity and the tackling of discrimination are highly effective. The action adopted to foster pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding and percolates through the whole school, underpinning pupils' excellent behaviour. Yet, their knowledge of other cultures is not quite so well developed.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, with much best practice, particularly related to child protection, supporting the high quality of care provided for children.
- The school engages with parents especially well and they are increasingly confident in supporting their children's learning and development.
- The local authority has provided helpful and effective support for the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body, which is led with much insight, displays an accurate grasp of school effectiveness. Its members are active in school and provide challenge and support in positive ways. They hold teachers to account for pupils' progress, ensuring that performance management systems firmly link quality of teaching to salary progression. Their regular training and briefings are put to good use in analysing school performance. Recent initiatives to rigorously monitor pupil attendance are proving successful. Finance is well managed, including the impact of pupil premium funding.

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	111718
Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	413051

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	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vivienne Flynn
Headteacher	Bernadette Rizzi-Allan
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2009
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