

English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School

Frindsbury Road, Strood, Rochester, ME2 4JA

Inspection dates 20–21 November 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.

- Achievement is good. Pupils make good progress from starting points that are well below expectations for their age.
- By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, attainment in English over time has usually been above that found nationally although it dipped in the, as yet unvalidated, results and assessments in 2013 to below average. Standards in mathematics improved from 2012 to above average in 2013.
- In the 2013, as yet unvalidated, national assessments, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 improved considerably from the previous two years to above average.
- Teaching is good. There are good relationships with pupils who work hard and want to do well.
- Children get a good start to school in the Reception class and reach a good level of development by the time they start in Year 1.
- Pupils feel safe in school and behave well. They enjoy coming to school as shown in their high attendance.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have successfully improved systems for tracking pupils' progress since the previous inspection and demonstrate the capacity for further improvement.
- The governing body effectively supports the school and holds it to account for its performance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. The pace of teaching and learning in some lessons is too slow. Teachers occasionally spend too long talking at the beginning of lessons, which restricts the amount of time pupils have to get on with their work and so they sometimes do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils' achievement in reading and writing is not as strong as their achievement in mathematics. Opportunities for developing literacy skills are not always fully embedded in other subjects.
- Handwriting skills are not consistently good enough and teachers do not always provide pupils with the handwriting model they expect the pupils to use, especially for the younger pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed substantial parts of 17 lessons, many of which were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors talked to pupils about their work and listened to some pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, other staff with key leadership responsibilities, groups of pupils, governors and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including the school's own check on its performance, its improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, monitoring information and the quality of teaching and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took account of 38 responses to the online Parent View survey, 69 responses to the school's own survey of parents and carers, and spoke to some parents and carers during the inspection. They also looked at 14 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Howard Dodd

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is above average as is the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils who are eligible for free school meals, are in the care of the local authority or are children from service families, is below average.
- The school meets the current government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher has been in post for two years.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring there is a good pace to teaching and learning in all lessons and enough time for pupils to get on with their work and make the progress of which they are capable.
- Raise achievement in reading and writing so that it matches pupils' achievement in mathematics by:
 - improving handwriting skills and ensuring teachers demonstrate a consistent approach to teaching handwriting and providing good models for pupils, especially those in the Reception class and Years 1 and 2.
 - ensuring that the school's review of the curriculum includes sufficient opportunities for pupils to use and develop literacy skills in other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement over time is good. From their well below starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the proportion of pupils making the expected or better progress by the end of Year 6 has been close to or above the national figures.
- In the, as yet unvalidated, 2013 results and assessments, attainment in reading and writing by the end of Year 6 dipped from above average in the previous two years to below average. This was in part because there was a much higher proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in this cohort than in the previous years. In addition, temporary weaknesses in teaching led to some disruption for pupils' learning; this issue has now been rectified.
- Standards in mathematics, however, improved in 2013 by the end of Year 6 and were above average.
- Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 2 improved considerably in 2013 and standards were above average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good and often very rapid progress from their low starting points and reach a good level of development. This is because of good provision that takes their needs and interests into account very well. Only their achievement in writing is below the expected level by the time they start in Year 1.
- Progress measures for the very few pupils eligible for the pupil premium in Year 6 in 2012 and 2013 show that they often progress as well as their peers. Their attainment in 2012, however, was nearly two years behind their classmates in English and 10 months behind in mathematics. In 2013 the gap narrowed in reading and writing but increased in mathematics. The gap between the achievement of pupils currently supported by pupil premium in all year groups is closing and in some cases the pupil premium groups are achieving better than their peers.
- All groups, including girls and boys, the most-able pupils and those from ethnic minority groups, make similar progress.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well and do better than similar pupils nationally. Their needs are accurately identified early and well-targeted and appropriate support is provided.
- In the Year 1 phonics screening check (linking sounds and letters) in 2012 the proportion of pupils achieving the expected results was below average. In the 2013 check, the proportion achieving the expected result improved considerably to above average. Group guided reading sessions are helping to improve pupils' comprehension skills and reading is promoted well across the school although sometimes opportunities are missed to develop literacy skills in other subjects.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching over time is typically good with some teaching that is outstanding.
- Almost all pupils clearly enjoy lessons and as a result pupils from different groups make good progress and achieve well.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Expectations are high for pupils' work and behaviour and pupils want to do well. Teachers plan activities that engage and motivate pupils to succeed. For example pupils in Year 4 got very involved in a discussion about wearing school uniforms and were determined and resolute in their opinions, which led to good quality persuasive writing.
- Teachers often model the organisation and structure of writing which is helpful for pupils but some do not demonstrate a consistent style of handwriting, which is not helpful, particularly for

younger pupils.

- Teachers are skilled in questioning pupils to extend their thinking and learning and there are lots of opportunities for pupils to share their ideas and thoughts with talk partners and learn from each other. Sometimes, however, teaching lacks pace as pupils can occasionally sit for too long, often to listen to over lengthy introductions and instructions, before getting on with their work. When this happens, pupils do not always have the time to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Guided reading sessions help to develop pupils' depth of understanding of characters and plots as well as higher-level skills of, for example, inference and deduction. Training in phonics teaching has ensured a consistent approach with clear benefits shown in the increased number of pupils achieving the expected results in the Year 1 phonics check.
- The focus on individual needs ensures that disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and the most-able pupils are supported effectively and progress well. Many lessons contain a good level of challenge to ensure that the learning needs of different groups are met. For example, pupils in Year 6 were calculating missing angles in triangles and challenges were extended for the most-able pupils while less-able pupils made good use of calculators to support their mathematical calculations and both groups made good progress as a result.
- Teaching assistants generally make a good contribution to pupils' learning particularly in providing small-group or individual support.
- Teachers ensure that targets for learning are clear to pupils and there are excellent examples of marking and feedback that give pupils clear pointers about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught well and enjoy learning through a broad range of activities that promote their independence and resilience. Early reading skills are taught well with good quality books that promote an enjoyment of reading and help develop writing skills, as seen when children wrote what they thought would happen next in the book, *Biscuit Bear*.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are friendly and happy to share their views about school and their work. They work well together, are keen to learn and have good attitudes to learning. They are polite and helpful.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Inspectors were particularly impressed with pupils' very good behaviour during two days of indoor playtimes and lunchtimes due to the weather. Year 6 pupils acted as good friends and monitors to younger pupils.
- Pupils behave equally well in class lessons and when working with teaching assistants or other adults outside of class lessons. School records show that this is typical of behaviour over time. Although good overall, and often exemplary, behaviour is not outstanding because on a very small number of occasions, where lessons do not fully engage, challenge or motivate pupils, they can become distracted and inattentive.
- Pupils say they are happy and feel safe in school. They say there used to be some bullying but it has got better over the last two years. Pupils are aware that bullying can take different forms such as name calling, physical and cyber bullying. They have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe including e-safety.
- The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey and the school's own survey earlier in the year agree that their children are happy at school, feel safe and are well looked after. Online responses show that the majority feel children are well behaved but the response in the school survey was much more positive.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides very effective leadership to the school and is very well supported by the deputy headteacher. Their ambition and vision, which are shared with all leaders including the governing body, are firmly anchored in a relentless drive to improve outcomes for pupils, whatever their background or ability, and expectations for teachers' performance and pupils' achievements are high.
- There is a strong and united teaching team. Robust monitoring and evaluation of teaching and of the school's performance inform improvement planning which gives a clear steer for future work with measurable targets to ensure that improvement is tracked and evaluated effectively.
- Effective systems are in place to track the progress of all groups of pupils, which was an issue to improve in the previous inspection report. This enables leaders to quickly identify and provide additional support for pupils who are not making the required progress. The effectiveness of this is very clear in the more rapid progress and improved achievement pupils made by the end of Year 2 last year.
- The checks on teachers' performance are clearly linked to pupils' progress. All teachers know they are accountable for pupils' progress and more frequent pupil progress meetings have helped to raise staff accountability. Teachers said they find the performance management process useful and positive.
- Senior and middle leaders make a positive contribution to whole-school improvement as well as providing skills and expertise in their particular areas of responsibility.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well and underpins all that the school does. It is firmly embedded in the subjects taught and in the ethos of the school. The school promotes its values as a church school and fosters pupils' understanding of different cultures and faiths.
- The curriculum is broad and meets the varied needs of pupils well. The school ensures that all pupils have access to the full range of subjects and learn without fear of any type of discrimination. The school is in the process of reviewing its curriculum and has correctly identified that future curriculum planning needs to ensure that there are opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills across a range of subjects.
- The inclusion leader works closely with the home and school support worker to support pupils and their families and remove barriers to learning for pupils who may be vulnerable. Pupils' personal, social and health education has a strong focus and demonstrates the importance the school places on promoting pupils' well-being, aspirations and self-esteem.
- The extra sports funding is being used in a variety of ways, including training Year 6 pupils to become 'young leaders' of sports and games to support other pupils at lunchtimes. Clear plans are in place to monitor the impact of the funding, particularly how well it is sustaining outcomes for pupils.
- The school has worked well with the local authority, which has provided good support to the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

The governing body knows the school's strengths and weaknesses and understands how well the school is doing compared to the national picture. Governors are committed to improvement and reviewing the impact of their work. There is a good understanding of the quality of teaching and the link to pupils' progress and pay and salary progression. Governors have supported the headteacher in making difficult decisions to maintain the good quality of teaching. Effective performance management systems are in place to ensure teachers and the headteacher fully meet their responsibilities and the targets set. The governing body has a good knowledge of how the school uses additional funding including the pupil premium and sports funding. It evaluates the impact of spending and ensures that pupils' well-being and achievement are successfully promoted. Governors meet their statutory duties including those 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	118766
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	428859

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Trollope
Headteacher	Jillian Oliver
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2009
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