

Our Lady of Hartley Catholic Primary School

Stack Lane, Hartley, Longfield, DA3 8BL

Inspection dates

21–22 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The drive, enthusiasm and vision of the headteacher have transformed the school from a good, high-achieving school into an outstanding one. As a result, staff, pupils and parents and carers are rightly proud of the school and fully committed to its motto of, 'Together in faith, love and learning'.
- Teaching is consistently good and much is outstanding because teachers have ensured that the behaviour and attitude of pupils to learning are exemplary.
- Pupils make exceptional progress in all subjects from generally average starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Standards have remained above average for the last three years so that by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are significantly above average.
- Mathematics is a key strength of the school. The structured development of problem solving skills across the school has led to significantly above average standards and improved progress in mathematics in the last three years.
- Progress in reading and writing is improving rapidly because of the opportunities provided for pupils to use their skills in different subjects.
- The wide variety of themes provided by the school ensures that pupils develop speaking and listening skills in a broad range of subjects and are prepared extremely well for their next stage of education.
- Support staff working with pupils in need of extra help, including those eligible for the pupil premium funding, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make a strong contribution to rising standards.
- The school provides pupils with the opportunity to experience and value periods of calm reflection, often through inspiring songs that are linked carefully to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils' relationships with one another and adults are outstanding and are a key strength of the school.
- Since the last inspection, the strong governing body has ensured the appointment of a strong headteacher and leadership team. Governors have supported the school to eliminate weaknesses.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 18 lessons, eight of which were jointly observed with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to other lessons, looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, parents and carers, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 85 parents and carers through the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the responses to a questionnaire completed by 28 staff.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation including the school's data about the progress of pupils and its analysis of its own strengths and weaknesses, improvement plans, safeguarding policies, and records and documents relating to the management of staff performance.

Inspection team

Justina Ilochi, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Antony Hayes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through pupil premium funding (additional government funding for certain groups, such as pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority) is below the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- There have been significant changes in the school since the last inspection. The headteacher has only been in post since April 2013, the deputy headteacher since September 2013 and the newly restructured senior leadership team commenced work in September, 2013.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the confidence of teachers to provide accurate information about the progress pupils are making that matches the progress seen in pupils' books.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Almost all children enter Reception with skills and knowledge that are similar to those expected nationally for their age. They make good progress in their personal and social development and the development of early reading and mathematical skills. As a result, most pupils start Year 1 with reading skills that are at a higher level than those usually found for their age.
- Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics and has been for the last three years. The school's internal assessments and work seen in pupils' books show that this trend is set to continue.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics in relation to their starting points is exceptional. In the last three years, almost two thirds of pupils in Year 6 made more than nationally expected rates of progress. This is because pupils' interest in the subject is encouraged right from when they start school. For example in the Reception class, several children during independent child-initiated activities were writing down numbers and sums and developing mathematical language exceptionally well.
- Pupils' progress in writing is on an upward trajectory, although lagging a little behind mathematics and reading. All pupils' writing is benefiting from increased opportunities to write at length in different contexts and subjects within a revised curriculum called the 'Mantle of the Expert'.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Parents and carers work jointly with the school to improve pupils' reading skills. Well-targeted teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 has ensured that pupils' understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is extremely secure and the proportion of pupils in Year 1 achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening tests is increasing rapidly.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are outstanding and continuously developed through well-planned opportunities to discuss and explore their ideas. For example, in an outstanding religious education lesson in Year 4, the teacher deftly invited pupils to describe and suggest appropriate topic headings for the story of Zechariah to their classmates using ideas derived from their study of a newspaper. Pupils were eager to come forward and their developing confidence with public speaking was evident.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is outstanding, as is the achievement of more-able pupils. This is because these groups are very well supported and appropriately challenged. The proportion of pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 attaining the higher levels is improving rapidly in writing and mathematics and remains stable in reading.
- Current school records show that the few pupils in the school who benefit from the pupil premium attained as well as their peers nationally in reading and mathematics and were less than half a term behind in writing. The school uses the designated funds well to support these pupils, including small-group support and special teaching programmes in English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Parents and carers, pupils and inspectors agree that outstanding achievement is the result of consistently good and frequently outstanding teaching.
- Teachers create a calm, welcoming and extremely positive learning environment which fosters good relationships and promotes high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and know their classes well.
- Teachers use high-quality resources, including information and communication technology (ICT),

to engage the interest of pupils for long periods of time. Staff are generally highly skilled at enabling pupils to work independently and initiate their own ideas. In one outstanding Year 5 'Mantle of Expert' lesson, pupils were excited about working in self-chosen groups on different aspects of a project. Some groups were researching their own reasons for donating to a charity on an iPad while others were preparing a written response to an investor. Pupils collaborated enthusiastically and worked hard to articulate their ideas extremely well.

- Teaching caters very well for more-able pupils by providing them with more challenging tasks. For example in Year 5, there is a strong emphasis on stretching the abilities of all pupils through small-group support at every level in literacy and mathematics, and as a result, they are already well prepared for the end of Key Stage 2 tests.
- Adults who support pupils in need of additional help, such as disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are making a strong contribution to pupils' good progress because their work is skilfully planned to match each individual's needs.
- The school's highly effective actions to raise standards in writing ensure that teachers systematically set out clear objectives and steps for success. Pupils are encouraged to write at length across a range of subjects and explicitly taught how to improve their use of grammar, spelling and punctuation. Material is well chosen to catch the attention of boys as well as girls.
- The way subjects and topics are taught is exciting and interesting for all pupils. All pupils thrive on teachers' challenging and open-ended questions which require them to work things out for themselves. In one particularly successful Year 3 music lesson, pupils were challenged to play specific notes on a violin following the modelling of the teacher. Not only were pupils able to meet the teacher's high expectations but their skills were similarly impressive.
- The marking and assessment of pupils' work are regular and consistently of good quality. Teachers use innovative and constructive ways which pupils understand to let pupils know how well they are doing and to encourage pupils to respond and improve their work. While written responses were seen often in books of pupils in Years 4 to 6, oral responses such as thumbs up or down and illustrations like smiley faces were seen in Years 1 and 2.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is exemplary. Inspectors completely agree with the pupil who said, 'Behaviour is brilliant and pupils have a hearty attitude to work.' Pupils and staff are unreservedly polite and courteous to one another and there is a strong community feeling fostered through inspirational assemblies of prayers and songs.
- Pupils display consistently positive attitudes to learning whether with a teaching assistant, class teacher or in assembly. They show high levels of engagement and excitement in their learning and can concentrate and listen for long periods without adult attention. They take great pride in their school and talk confidently and enthusiastically about their learning and achievements.
- Pupils are eager to learn and are highly motivated. They demonstrate outstanding social skills, working well together in pairs or small groups. They respond well to teachers' high expectations and seize opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.
- All staff are skilled and highly consistent in their approaches to behaviour, which contributes to the pupils' outstanding achievement. Lessons are never disrupted by bad behaviour and unacceptable incidents are very few. Only two incidents happened in the last year. There have been no exclusions for the last three years.
- Relationships in the school are excellent. All pupils feel safe and secure in the school. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe. For example they know and understand what

constitutes different forms of bullying including cyber bullying and have been taught extensively about e-safety. Consequently, bullying is extremely rare since pupils fully recognise the importance of caring for each other and valuing each other's views and opinions.

- In lessons, pupils are taught the value of periods of calm reflection and listening, often linked carefully to the extremely effective provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Consequently, pupils' behaviour, attitudes and relationships with one another and adults are outstanding and are a key strength of the school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The new headteacher, ably supported by a highly ambitious, professional and uncompromising senior leadership team, has justifiably earned the trust and respect of the school community by providing very strong leadership in a very short time that has empowered staff as well as pupils to develop their talents and to do as well as they can.
- Central to the school's outstanding improvement over the last three years is the robustness of the school's view of its own strengths and weaknesses and the high-quality training and professional development for staff. All teaching staff are subject leaders. The school's planning for the future is linked extremely well to the school's self-assessment. This was an area for improvement in the last inspection report and confirms the school's continued capacity for improvement.
- The performance of staff is built on rigorous and accurate checking of their lessons, their planning and pupils' progress. Staff have specific targets which are sharply focused on pupils' achievement and which also build on staff interests. Staff pay levels are increasingly well matched to their expertise and responsibilities.
- The new leadership team has ensured that assessment information is now gathered more frequently so pupils' progress is checked against national expectations. There are clear plans to improve the confidence of teachers to provide increasingly accurate information about pupils that matches the progress pupils are making as seen in their books.
- The curriculum is vibrant, very well planned and meets the needs and interests of all pupils exceptionally well. The school's creative curriculum called 'Mantle of Experts' with its strong emphasis on developing a wide range of interests and talents has made sure that pupils also achieve very well in other subjects such as music, history and geography, information and communication technology (ICT), religious education and the arts. Overall, therefore, pupils' achievement is outstanding.
- The school's commitment to ensuring equality is evident in its targeting of additional support to ensure that all pupils now make similarly outstanding progress. The use of additional funding from the pupil premium is managed extremely well. Leaders know that small-group teaching of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is leading to narrowing the gaps in attainment for this group particularly in reading and mathematics.
The school uses the government funding for sport to pay for additional adults to support its extra-curricular sports programmes and to provide models of good practice for the teaching of physical education. There are clear plans to measure the impact of this funding on the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is highly successful and embedded in the curriculum and the everyday life of the school. There is a strong emphasis on spiritual education linked to the school's strong Catholic philosophy and motto 'together in faith, love and learning'. Pupils are encouraged to reflect deeply, explore ideas and think about differences between people, their points of view and cultures.
- The school encourages parents and carers to join in the life of the school. It operates an 'open-door' policy which gives parents and carers an opportunity to engage with staff. Those who responded to the online questionnaire and talked to the inspectors were extremely positive

about the way the school keeps them informed about their children's welfare and progress. They know their children's learning is outstanding because their attitude to learning is exceptional.

- The support the local authority has given the school is 'light touch'. However, the school has welcomed in a very positive way and valued the high-quality expertise and support it has received. The school particularly appreciated the reviews that followed the previous inspection, which were effective in helping sharpen its focus on what needed to be done.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Since the last inspection, the governing body has ensured the appointment of a strong headteacher and senior leadership team. Governors have supported the school to eliminate weaknesses.
- Governance is strong because the governing body has been effective in challenging senior leaders to bring about improvement. This is mainly because governors are experienced and have been trained exceptionally well to ensure they understand information about pupils' attainment and progress and the performance of the school, for example, as shown in Ofsted's 'data dashboard'. Governors know how well the school is doing compared with other schools nationally.
- Governors are extremely knowledgeable about the quality of teaching. They have contributed to the school's performance management policies that ensure that pay rises are linked to good or better teaching and management.
- Governors have planned effective ways for measuring the impact of the additional funding the school receives for sport or the pupil premium and they are well informed by school leaders about the difference the pupil premium funding is making to the achievement and well-being of eligible pupils.
- Governors take safeguarding very seriously and have effective procedures to ensure that pupils are safe. Staff and governors have undertaken appropriate training in child protection and safer recruitment.

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	118863
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426606

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	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frank Stanley
Headteacher	Patrina Begley
Date of previous school inspection	[add date]
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