

English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School

Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4BE

Inspection dates 27–28 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Most pupils in all year groups are achieving well. They make good progress in their reading, writing and mathematics from their below average starting points.
- Pupils who are new to learning English as an additional language, disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs, and those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals all achieve well.
- Pupils' attainment, although dipping slightly in 2013, has risen rapidly in recent years and most pupils are currently working at levels above those expected for their ages.
- Leaders have been highly successful at raising the expectations of teachers and pupils. Teaching in the school is now good with much that is outstanding.
- The governing body has provided strong leadership by giving support and challenge to school leaders and setting out clearly its expectations for the school's future.
- Leaders, managers and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and have taken decisive and effective action to improve the quality of teaching and to raise pupils' achievement further.
- Pupils behave well, feel safe and enjoy their learning. Their positive attitudes are evident in their good and improving attendance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teaching is not yet outstanding because some lessons do not provide enough challenge to allow pupils to make rapid progress. Teachers do not always use questions that prompt pupils to think deeply.
- The way subjects and topics are arranged across the school does not do enough to nurture pupils' independence and imagination or develop their creativity, in order to fully motivate the least enthusiastic learners.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 21 lessons, including five that were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and visited classrooms with senior staff to look at how well disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs were learning. Inspectors also visited lessons with senior staff to look at pupils' progress in mathematics and English and at learning in a wide range of other subjects.
- Discussions were held with senior and subject leaders, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and four other members, a representative of the local authority and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at its checks on how well it is doing, its planning documents, external evaluations of its work and examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors took note of the 67 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Parents', carers' and pupils' responses to the school's own recent surveys and written comments made by parents and carers were considered. Inspectors also analysed the responses to inspection questionnaires returned by 32 staff.

Inspection team

Michael Merchant, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Keith Homewood	Additional Inspector
John Worgan	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Just under a half of all pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest of which is pupils of Black African heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium (additional funding from the government for some groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and other groups) is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.
- In 2012, high numbers of pupils joined the school midway through Key Stage 2.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that pupils make consistently rapid progress, and attainment rises further by:
 - making sure that all teachers plan lessons that fully challenge all groups to learn at a rapid pace
 - making sure that all teachers use questions in lessons which encourage all pupils to think deeply and give full answers
 - developing pupils' investigational skills in lessons so that they become more independent and less reliant on their teachers
 - widening pupils' horizons and breadth of experience by giving more chances for them to develop their creativity and imagination through areas such as art, music, cookery and information and communication technology (ICT).

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils start at the school with skills and abilities that are below the levels typical for their age, particularly in communication skills. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress, especially in reading, where particular attention is paid to their ability to blend sounds and letters into words (phonics).
- The achievement of all groups of pupils as they pass through the school, including those from the wide range of different heritages and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, is good. This reflects the success of the school's determination that all pupils should have an equal opportunity to succeed.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has risen rapidly in recent years and was above average in 2011 and 2012. Results in national tests in 2013 showed a slight dip compared to previous years. These results were strongly influenced by the high numbers of pupils who joined the school late in Key Stage 2 with skills in reading, writing and mathematics well below the levels expected of pupils nationally.
- These 'late-joiners' made good progress in relation to their starting points when they started at the school, but their attainment was still below average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. The attainment of those pupils who had been at the school throughout Key Stage 2 was above average.
- Pupils who attained highly at the end of Key Stage 1 make good progress overall as they pass through Key Stage 2. The progress that these more-able pupils make in mathematics, although good, lags behind the rapid gains that they make in their reading and writing. This is because teachers do not always encourage well enough pupils' high-level problem-solving skills in mathematics.
- The high proportion of pupils that join the school speaking English as an additional language make good progress in developing their speaking, reading and writing skills. This is because all teachers regard themselves as teachers of English as an additional language and they, and other adults, play an important role in supporting such pupils.
- Across the school, leaders have instilled an awareness of the need to develop the reading, writing and speaking skills of pupils, and teachers plan assiduously to use these skills in lessons. Standards in reading are improving year on year. By the end of Year 2, and by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, their reading abilities are above those expected of their age. The school has completely eliminated the historical gap between the reading skills of boys and girls, and many of the boys are now eager readers.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make consistently good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. Teachers and other adults prepare work for these pupils at precisely the right level. Carefully targeted support means that they make at least good progress in relation to their starting points.

The school plans well-judged extra support for pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. It has provided individual help and guidance, additional tuition, as well as financial support to enable them to participate in out-of-school activities and courses. This support has reduced the gap in attainment between these pupils and others across all year groups, so that it is smaller than that seen nationally. They attain very similar levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 as other pupils and make very similar rates of progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is consistently good throughout the school with much that is outstanding.
- Teachers and teaching assistants plan lessons very well together. Pupils now learn quickly because most teachers expect much of their pupils, not just in terms of achievement, but in the

amount, complexity and challenge of tasks.

- Where teaching falls short of outstanding, the pace of learning is slower and lessons lack imagination and challenge and this holds some pupils back from making even faster progress.
- Pupils develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding very well through regular times and opportunities to talk with partners or in small groups where they can support each other with their learning. Relationships with teachers and other adults are excellent and, as a result, pupils are willing to take part in activities that require confidence, such as acting out roles in stories they have created. Many opportunities are seized to allow pupils to reflect and to show respect for others.
- Most lessons are purposeful because teachers make it clear to pupils what they are trying to achieve. Pupils learn fastest when they are busy and active in lessons, finding things out for themselves or talking about their work with their classmates.
- An example of teaching which enthused pupils to learn actively was seen in an exciting and high-powered Year 2 lesson on fossils when pupils eagerly and energetically set about making their own fossils using clay and moulds and made great gains in developing their creativity and imagination.
- In mathematics, teachers use their strong subject knowledge and understanding to plan for imaginative and engaging activities. This was well displayed in a very successful Year 5 mathematics lesson. Pupils were captivated and enthused by the sheer speed and demand of the mental arithmetic tasks set by the teacher. They relished the intellectual demand of the activity and took great pride in completing the task.
- Leaders have secured big improvements in the quality of teachers' marking so that most pupils know precisely how well they are doing and what levels they are aiming for. Teachers give strong and helpful advice to pupils, both in the comments they write when marking pupils' books and when discussing their work with them in class. This gives pupils a very clear indication of how they can improve their work and sets them additional challenges to follow up.
- In the best lessons, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work independently and think for themselves. This is not always the case and some lessons are too dominated by the teacher, which does not always enable pupils to show what they can do.
- Although most teachers use questions very well to encourage pupils to think and debate their work with others, occasionally, questions are not used as well as they could be to probe pupils' understanding and to prompt them to fully explain their answers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. They respond well to the effective systems the school uses to manage behaviour.
- Children settle very well when they join the Reception classes. This is the result of very effective arrangements between school and home for managing the change from one to the other. Children from the wide range of heritages play and learn very well together, and this continues throughout the school.
- Strong provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contributes to their consistently good behaviour around the school and in enrichment activities and assemblies. They develop very well as articulate, courteous and considerate young people, extremely well aware of how to lead safe and healthy lives.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school and if they have a problem, they know they can talk to an adult who will help them solve it.
- Pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are well cared for by the range of support from the school and work from professionals outside the school. All pupils enjoy being part of the school community and relish all the school has to offer them.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying and say that the use of racist or unkind language is extremely rare. If it does occur, pupils are confident that it will be challenged and dealt with successfully by staff.

- Attendance is currently above average and is improving for all groups of pupils. Most pupils come to school regularly and are punctual.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because in some lessons, pupils can be passive and over-reliant on the teacher, and in a few lessons are less than enthusiastic in their learning.

The leadership and management are good

- The strong and tenacious leadership of the headteacher is one of the key factors in the school's success. The determined and clear-sighted drive of the senior leaders has led to rapid improvements in teaching and learning which in turn are leading to an acceleration of pupils' achievement. Consequently, the school has improved from being satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection to being good now. The school is well placed to continue to improve.
- The headteacher, with excellent support from the governing body, has been instrumental in leading a transformation of the school. Governors have galvanised the senior leadership and those with subject responsibilities so that all are performing their roles with passion and enthusiasm. Staff have high expectations and ambition for pupils, and have responded with eagerness and confidence to the challenge to improve lessons for pupils.
- The sharp focus on making everyone accountable for their performance has brought about a rapid change in the quality of teaching and of the rate of pupils' achievement. Learning, progress and the quality of teaching are monitored regularly and are closely linked to teachers' performance and pay increases. Leaders' observations of lessons identify good practice, which can be shared, and also trigger support when teaching requires improvement.
- There is strong commitment from all staff to achieve the best for all the pupils. Pupils are given challenging academic targets that have raised their ambitions. Leaders at all levels make good use of information on pupils' progress to check any slowing down. Checks are followed up swiftly with well-thought-out support that helps pupils to catch up.
- The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is demonstrated by the great care it takes to ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress. All available resources, including pupil premium funding, are used to overcome barriers to pupils' learning.
- The way subjects and topics are organised has a rigorous focus on literacy and numeracy skills. However, the school has rightly identified that pupils do not have enough opportunities to fully develop their creativity and imagination.
- The school has used the new primary sports funding effectively to improve the quality and breadth of physical education and sport provision. The range of after-school sports clubs has been extended and specialist staff employed to improve pupils' expertise in different sporting activities. There has been increased participation in sporting activities.
- The support from the local authority has helped the school improve since the previous inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have been highly influential in guiding school improvement. Governors keep their skills up to date through regular training and are very well informed about how well the school is doing. They receive regular and comprehensive information from the headteacher and visit regularly to monitor the school's work. They know where the best teaching is in the school and so are in a strong position to contribute to school development and improvement planning. Governors have contributed fully to the discussions on how the pupil premium funding should be spent and have kept a careful check on the impact of the extra support and guidance provided for eligible students. They hold the headteacher to account for the way in which increases in pay are used to reward teachers. They know how any underperformance is being tackled. Governors meet all their responsibilities well, including national requirements for safeguarding pupils.

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	110004
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	426423
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	407
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alistair Baker
Headteacher	Jamie Carroll
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2011
Telephone number	0118 9375466
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