

St Laurence in Thanet CE Junior Academy

Newington Road, Ramsgate, Kent, CT11 0QX

Inspection dates 21–22 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' progress across the school is starting to improve, but it is not yet rapid enough to compensate for past weaknesses in their learning.
- Pupils do not make sufficiently accelerated progress in mathematics. They do not confidently apply their mathematical skills to everyday problems or situations.
- Not all pupils have enough time to respond to teachers' marking of their work, so it does not result in quick improvements. Not enough pupils are confident writers, for example, or have enough opportunities to develop their skills in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Teachers do not consistently draw out the best from pupils, particularly those who are more able, to help boost their learning to good or better levels. Teachers are not always confident enough to make use of the pupils' generally good behaviour and attitudes to learning in planning more innovative lessons.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs do not yet make good progress. This is also true for those pupils entitled to extra funding called the pupil premium.
- Many staff roles, systems and routines are new or not yet completed, so it is not clear if they are fully effective in boosting pupils' learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is increasing. Pupils who are particularly vulnerable are cared for well to aid their learning. Pupils behave well in lessons, around school and they enjoy attending
- Progress has begun to improve across the school. Pupils' attainment has risen to broadly average levels in reading and writing.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Leaders, including trustees, are steering the school increasingly effectively. As a result, the pace of improvement is accelerating. Sports funding is used effectively to supplement pupils' class based learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the school’s work, scrutinised information on pupils’ progress and looked at work in pupils’ books. They considered information about safeguarding, monitoring of teaching and behaviour management.
- Most of the inspection was spent observing teaching. Inspectors observed teaching in 16 lessons, including four joint lesson observations with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed small groups of pupils working with an adult other than their teacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 3 and 6 and talked to these children about their learning in classes.
- Meetings were held with leaders, members of school staff, members of the trustees and a representative of the diocese’s school improvement team.
- Inspectors talked to a small group of pupils formally and others informally in lessons and on the playground.
- Inspectors took account of 41 responses to the Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and the views expressed by a number of parents who spoke informally at the beginning of the school day. The results of 33 questionnaires completed by staff were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Kevin Hodge, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Helen Hutchings

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a broadly average-sized school.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority or from other groups, is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action is also higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much lower than average and most pupils speak English as their first language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school runs a breakfast club each morning.
- The school converted to an academy at the beginning of December 2012, sponsored by the Diocese of Canterbury. The headteacher retired last July. There is an acting headteacher and deputy headteacher who have led the school since September 2013. Several staff have left or joined the school since it became an academy and the trustees are hoping to appoint a permanent headteacher this term.
- The school is part of a partnership, the Broadstairs and Ramsgate Ethos School Improvement Company (BRESIC) which is supported by the Dioceses of Canterbury

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching across the school so that a greater proportion is at least good by ensuring that:
 - teachers have the highest expectations of what all pupils can achieve
 - pupils have enough time to complete work and make the necessary improvements as a response to teachers' marking
 - ensuring that pupils capable of harder work can jump straight into more difficult tasks when appropriate
 - pupils have more opportunities to apply their number skills in everyday situations.
- Raise standards and strengthen pupils' achievement, so that more pupils learn at a faster rate, ensuring that:
 - progress over time is consistently good leading to higher standards, especially in mathematics
 - pupils develop skills to write more confidently using accurate spelling and punctuation
 - improvements to the provision for those who are disabled or who have special educational needs or who are entitled to extra funding lead to more rapid progress for these pupils.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills in their day-to-day work
 - providing more support to senior and middle leaders as they establish or take over new roles of responsibility.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because pupils do not yet make consistently good progress through the school from their starting points. In the school's first national tests, taken last July, results were close to the levels expected nationally. In mathematics, pupils' attainment is lower than English. Although pupils' basic number work and calculation are usually accurate, pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply this knowledge to everyday problems or situations.
- Weaknesses still remain in aspects of pupils' writing as pupils are not fully confident to write at length, and their writing often contains simple spelling errors or lapses in punctuation.
- In some lessons, particularly for the more able pupils, there is limited challenge. For example, in one English lesson, the teacher worked well with one small group of pupils, but a number of other pupils marked time in their learning as the challenge in their work was too limited.
- The school identified weaknesses for those pupils who join the school in both their reading and writing ability. As a result, a newly introduced structured scheme of work is starting to pay dividends in helping to boost pupils' confidence. Regular weekly writing sessions are relatively new, but are starting to have an effect in boosting pupils' willingness to write. Pupils generally read confidently, although they do not know many authors or types of books.
- Funding for sports provision is enabling a number of initiatives to take place such as dance, extra swimming lessons and gymnastics.
- Pupils who are eligible for extra funding known as the pupil premium do not yet make sufficiently good progress. Gaps in their learning when compared with others nationally have been behind by as much as a year, but current checks on pupils' progress show that these gaps are narrowing, albeit slowly at times, more typically to six or less months, behind others. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language integrate well into lessons; but, like their classmates, make adequate rather than good progress.
- The progress of pupils with special educational needs or who have disabilities requires improvement as they do not yet make the accelerated progress needed to make up for past underachievement. That said, the school caters for their pastoral and personal needs well which is now starting to impact upon improving pupils' learning.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Not enough teaching is consistently good or outstanding in order to accelerate pupils' progress more rapidly and so requires improvement.
- Since becoming an academy, the proportion of more effective teaching has increased and very weak teaching is extremely rare. This is starting to help pupils make better progress, but there are still times when all pupils could be encouraged to do more work, more quickly.
- This is particularly true for those pupils who are capable of harder work. Although staff plan clearly for different groups of pupils, in reality in lessons this does not always result in them tackling harder work or being challenged to do the very best they can. For example, it can take some time for them to get on to the harder work of which they are capable, as they have to first tackle the less challenging work set for all pupils.
- The use of modern audio visual technology is starting to aid pupils' learning, but is often used too infrequently to help boost learning more quickly.
- Projects, such as studies of the 1960s, help motivate pupils' learning and provide opportunities for pupils to talk about the 'pros' and 'cons' of capital punishment for example.
- Displays around the school and within classrooms show that staff take care to display pupils' work in order to boost their motivation, interests and to celebrate their successes. Within their books, staff mark pupils' work regularly, although do not always give sufficient time for pupils to

make the necessary improvements.

- Recent initiatives to help boost pupils' writing abilities are starting to take effect, although they are relatively new. For example, an effective lesson with a small group of pupils helped them to learn simple spellings, punctuation and sentence construction in a fun way.
- Other adults who help in class usually provide the right type of help, particularly to those who have special educational needs or who are eligible for extra funding. But, along with their peers, these pupils are not always stretched sufficiently in the pace of their work, or by accurate spellings and careful presentation being insisted upon.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour of pupils is good. The change to an academy has not derailed the generally good behaviour that older pupils say has been a feature of the new school. However, this generally good behaviour, reflected in prompt arrival of lessons and a tidy and attractive school, is not always capitalised upon by staff. It sometimes results in lessons which are a bit predictable or not very innovative in their organisation.
- Pupils say they enjoy school, like their teachers and that bullying is relatively rare, despite a small number of parents indicating some concern in their response to the Ofsted questionnaire. A large majority indicated their child was happy at the school.
- The school council enjoys its role and is proud to have been involved in helping to arrange for a bike shed to be installed recently. 'Sports buddies' are also proud of their hats and uniforms and their role in helping others to keep active and healthy at morning and lunch playtimes. Clubs covering a range of sporting, musical and cultural activities helps widen the pupils' understanding. Pupils say they enjoy the breakfast club, which cares for them well.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents say their children are safe, confirmed by their discussions with inspectors. Although admitting that there are occasional pupils who are disruptive or find routines difficult to follow, they say this is relatively rare. They understand the difficulties posed by internet access, know what is safe to do online, and are clear about what to do should any difficulties arise.
- Those pupils whose circumstances made them vulnerable are cared for well and links with parents are good in that they have a variety of opportunities to visit the school and discuss individual circumstances with staff. This is making a good contribution in helping pupils to be more ready to learn as they are less anxious when in school. Effective monitoring has resulted in pupils' attendance being higher than average.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Senior leaders and trustees have navigated the change to an academy with some success, but leadership and management require improvement because the changes put in place are relatively new, not fully proven and have not yet had enough time to impact on improving pupils' learning to good or outstanding levels.
- The acting headteacher since September has succeeded in reviewing a number of areas of the school's work and this is starting to take effect, particularly in the way that the performance of teaching is being managed so that the proportion of very weak teaching or teaching that requires improvement has reduced. Links with parents are improving, with a small number more ready to attend events in school. Links with other schools are benefiting exchanges of ideas and approaches.
- Despite both senior leadership positions being temporary, pending the appointment of a permanent headteacher this term, and a number of changes in staff, the day-to-day running of the school has been maintained. Senior leaders have correctly identified areas to improve and resulting actions are starting to take effect in aiding improvement. Staff report that they feel part of the team and are praiseworthy of the way the school has completed its first year.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced, and is extended through musical and cultural experiences, such as learning a musical instrument or visits to places of interest. Recent revisions to provide more direct help to increase pupils' skills in writing and reading are starting to work, but these are comparatively new approaches. Pupils do not have enough day-to-day opportunities to use their otherwise secure ICT skills to enhance their learning in different subjects.
- Middle leaders (those responsible for age groups or subjects) are relatively new in their role, but have started to look at their subjects, identify areas in need of improvement and set in motion actions to bring about improvement. Many initiatives have only started last term, however, such as those designed to help boost pupils' reading and writing, and in mathematics where pupils are tested more regularly to identify areas of weakness. It is still too early to say if these initiatives have been fully effective.
- Staff, including senior leaders, have benefited from outside expertise in order to identify ways of monitoring and improving teaching. This has led to better, but not consistently good or outstanding, teaching through the school. It has helped confirm to staff that salary progression is linked closely to the improved performance of pupils in class.
- The diocese's and external professionals have provided a range of help in aiding the school to identify existing weaknesses, pupils' underachievement and to identify what needs to be done in order for the school's effectiveness to improve.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Trustees have taken the opportunity through the change to academy status to review its routines, committee structures and ways of supporting the school. This has resulted in them developing a clear ethos and vision. Changes in routine are relatively new, such as the trustees now visit the school to gauge progress. The trustees are aware of how the school compares to others and realise its focus has not always resulted in catering well for pupils' academic needs. However, they ensure that pupils' safety, security and well-being are catered for well. Trustees do not tolerate discrimination, reflected in the extra support given to pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, and their families. Trustees have also benefited from external training and support in navigating the changes associated with the move to academy status. This also enabled them to review staffing structures, salary levels and posts of responsibility, pending the appointment of a permanent headteacher and deputy headteacher. Trustees are also aware of how extra pupil premium funding is used, although have not yet had the benefit of an external review to assess how well this extra funding is being used to boost these pupils' learning further.

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	138592
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	433776

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Hawkins
Headteacher	Michelle Palmer
Date of previous school inspection	26–27 May 2010
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