

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Marston Road, Stafford, ST16 3BT

Inspection dates 18–19 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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

- The headteacher and governors have not done enough, since the last inspection, to make sure that pupils continue to achieve well in all subjects.
- Some groups, particularly boys and those supported by extra government funding, are not making fast enough progress to catch up with their classmates in writing.
- The teaching is not making sure that all groups of pupils make good progress in writing.
- Pupils make too many spelling and punctuation errors that are not corrected.
- Not all pupils work hard to improve their writing or to improve the way their work is presented.
- The checks on the quality of teaching made by the headteacher are not focused sharply enough on its impact on pupils' learning.
- The school has not checked to make sure that the extra government funding has had the intended impact on the progress of eligible pupils.
- The school's plans for improvement are not sufficiently sharply focused to bring about rapid improvements in pupils' progress in writing.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are making faster progress in reading and mathematics than they are in writing.
- Standards in reading at the end of Year 6, last year, were above the national average.
- Teaching in Year 6 is good.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- The new deputy headteacher is using her expertise to establish high expectations of what pupils can achieve in writing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 15 lessons. Six of these were carried out jointly with the headteacher. The inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and on the playground, and heard some of them read.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's plans for improvement, and policies about keeping pupils safe. They also examined the work in pupils' books, and a range of data about their progress.
- The inspectors held discussions with teachers, the headteacher, three members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority.
- The views of parents were analysed from the 30 responses to the questionnaire on the Parent View website. In addition, the views of parents who spoke to inspectors during the inspection were considered.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Christopher Parker, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Malcolm Johnstone

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school has a smaller than average number of pupils for a school of this type.
- Three quarters of the pupils are White British. One in 10 of the pupils are of Indian heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs at school action (pupils who need extra support with their learning) is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also average.
- A quarter of the pupils are supported through the pupil premium. This is similar to the national average. The pupil premium is extra government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those children who are looked after by the local authority, and pupils who have a parent serving in the armed services.
- The proportion of pupils who leave and join the school at different times in the year is similar to that in most schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There have been many changes of staff since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher was appointed to the post in September 2013. At the same time, two newly qualified teachers were appointed. Two classes are taught by temporary teachers.
- At the time of the inspection Year 5 pupils were on a residential visit.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching of writing so that more boys and those pupils supported by the pupil premium make good progress by:
 - improving spelling and punctuation skills
 - expecting high standards of handwriting and presentation
 - ensuring that all pupils concentrate and work hard in lessons
 - giving pupils clear guidance on how to improve their writing and ensuring that they routinely correct it.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - making sure that checks on the quality of teaching focus on its impact on pupils' learning and progress, and provide guidance to teachers about how to improve the teaching of writing
 - setting clear targets and timescales against which governors can evaluate the success of improvement plans
 - evaluating the impact of the spending of pupil premium funds on the progress of eligible pupils to make sure the gap in their attainment in writing with that of their classmates is closed.

Undertake an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The results of national tests, at the end of Year 2, fell in 2013. Standards in writing were below average. At the end of Year 6, results in reading and mathematics recovered following a dip in 2012. However, results in writing were weaker and in grammar, spelling and punctuation pupils left the school more than a term behind pupils nationally.
- The most able pupils are making the progress expected of them. In 2013, all of the pupils who scored highly when they were in Year 2 did so in Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. However, too few pupils who reached the expected level at the end of Year 2 made sufficient progress in writing.
- Most pupils are making the progress expected of them, but too few boys and those pupils supported by the pupil premium are making good progress in writing. Consequently, the gaps between boys and girls, and between those supported by the pupil premium and their classmates, are not closing in all year groups.
- Those pupils supported by the pupil premium are not making fast enough progress to catch up. Last year this group of pupils left the school having reached similar standards to their classmates in mathematics. However, they were a term behind them in reading and a year behind them in writing.
- Progress in reading is generally good. Most, although not yet all, of the pupils who did not do as well as they should in the check on their early reading skills in Year 1 last year, have caught up. Older pupils read widely and talk confidently about the books they read both at school and at home. Pupils of Indian heritage do well.
- Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making the progress expected of them in lessons. Often these pupils are given helpful support and useful resources but occasionally they are set the same work as their classmates which is too difficult for them.
- The children start school with skills that are expected for their age. Last year a greater proportion of children, than found nationally, reached a good level of development in preparation for Year 1 in all areas of learning except in reading and writing. Progress in the Nursery is faster than in the Reception class.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is too much variation in the teaching of writing and in teachers' expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation of their work. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Consequently, pupils are not making consistently good progress in writing.
- In some year groups the pupils are not prepared thoroughly enough for the writing tasks that they are set. In addition, their work is not marked in a way that guides them to improve their punctuation and spelling or the way they compose sentences. Several changes of staff in some year groups have made it difficult to establish consistent approaches to the teaching of writing.
- The teaching of writing is very effective in Year 6. Here, the teacher engages and motivates the

pupils, particularly boys, by using text, film and audio, for example, to introduce them to the life and work of Shakespeare. As a result, they have written interesting and well-set-out biographies of Shakespeare's life.

- The teaching of pupils supported by the pupil premium has not helped them to catch up with their classmates. The headteacher has recently allocated specific support through an additional teacher for these pupils. However, the school does not have systems in place to evaluate how effective such an approach has been.
- The teaching of early reading is increasingly systematic. This is the main reason that pupils in Year 1 are on course to achieve much better results in the national check this year, following low results in 2013. Recent training has increased the consistency of the teaching of the sounds that letters represent although very occasionally adults do not sound letters precisely enough.
- The teaching of the youngest children makes sure they grow in confidence. Improvements in the way the children's progress is assessed and recorded is helping the teachers to focus more sharply on early reading and writing skills. The children learn well through a broad range of activities both inside and outside the classroom.
- The teaching of mathematics, particularly to the oldest pupils, has resulted in them making faster progress. This is because the pupils are posed problems, for example, about the costs of developing a space suit, that make them think hard and use the skills they have been taught to solve them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Attitudes to learning are not consistently positive. Although few in number, some pupils – often boys – do not work as hard as they could. They 'sit back' when they are not fully engaged by the task and their concentration wanders. Some books contain incomplete pieces of work where pupils have not persevered for long enough.
- The pupils are polite and mostly they respond quickly to their teacher's instructions, although occasional calling out interrupts learning. A few members of staff do not agree that behaviour is well managed. Many pupils, although not yet all, have responded positively to the drive to improve handwriting and presentation. Some older pupils take considerable pride in their work.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Checks to make sure that adults are able to work with children are carried out thoroughly. Teachers have completed up-to-date safeguarding training. The safety of pupils is a high priority for the school. Posters showing who pupils can speak to, if they have concerns, are displayed throughout the school.
- Pupils spoken to by inspectors say that they feel safe on the playground. They were unable to recall any instances of bullying. They know about the forms that bullying can take and know how to stay safe when using the internet. The online survey of parents' views indicates that those who replied agreed that their children feel safe at school.
- Attendance is broadly average. Pupils say they like school. Pupils in Year 6 were particularly appreciative of the help they receive from their teachers and the opportunity to respond to comments on their work. In some other year groups pupils do not act upon their teachers' comments and, consequently, sometimes they repeat the same mistakes.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher checks the quality of teaching. However, her observations are not focused sharply enough on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress. Conclusions drawn from recent observations are too broad to help the teachers to increase the rate at which pupils make progress in writing.
- The analysis of pupils' progress, term by term, covers all groups in the school. However, not enough has been done to ensure that those pupils supported by the pupil premium catch up with their classmates. Funds have not been used solely for this purpose and, therefore, it is difficult for the headteacher to determine how effectively the money has been spent.
- The new deputy headteacher, who is the subject leader for English, is a strong role model and is using her expertise to raise standards in writing. However, the schools' plans for improvement do not provide a clear framework within which the teachers can collectively improve pupils' progress in writing.
- The impact of the actions in the school improvement plan is not being recorded. Although discussed with governors, the plan does not contain sufficient detail about when actions will be completed or precise enough criteria against which the headteacher and governors can evaluate success.
- The appraisal of teachers is carried out systematically and targets are set as a result of the analysis of the progress pupils are making. Of the current teaching staff, only two teachers have been at the school long enough to complete the annual cycle. This highlights the difficulty the school has experienced in establishing a settled group of teachers.
- The subjects and topics the pupils are taught provide a range of interesting opportunities for them to learn and make progress. The teachers create opportunities for pupils to write in a range of subjects although sometimes their expectations are not as high as they should be and the work is not marked with sufficient rigour.
- The extra funding for sport and physical education is being used to provide pupils with a broader range of opportunities for exercise. Most of the money is allocated to buying sports coaches to lead lessons and after school activities. As a result, pupils in Year 1 are making good progress in developing their ability to strike a ball while those in Year 6 are extending their racket skills.
- The local authority has not challenged the school sufficiently, until recently. A 'core group', was set up in January 2014, to guide and check the school's improvement, because of concerns about the pupils' performance in 2013 national tests. As a result, the headteacher feels the local authority knows the school better than it did previously.
- The local authority officer is reviewing the quality of teaching and learning every half term and checking the rate of progress made by the pupils. These activities have not yet established consistently good teaching or rapid progress for the pupils. The school has received support from the local authority which has strengthened teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The local authority's human resources department has helped the school to manage underperformance and to support those returning from illness. The governors have found local authority training on progress data particularly helpful. They pay for a clerk to take notes at their meetings and value this service.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governors have a more realistic view of the school's performance than is recorded in the school's self evaluation. They know the school well, but have not been able to bring about the improvements they have wanted in the recent past. Governors are very concerned about the difficulties the school has in recruiting teachers and keeping them at the school.
- Governors receive information about the quality of teaching and support the headteacher to tackle underperformance. Training in the analysis of data has helped them to establish a clear understanding of how well pupils are doing.
- Governors review all spending and know how the pupil premium has been spent. However, they have not been given sufficient information to consider the impact it has had on pupils' achievements.
- Governors set targets for the headteacher and make sure that the teachers' appraisals are carried out effectively. Any increases in teachers' pay are linked to their performance.
- Governors check that the arrangements to make sure the pupils are kept as safe as possible are up to date. Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements.

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	124362
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	431520

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	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lyn Cycles
Headteacher	Ann Goodison
Date of previous school inspection	05 May 2009
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