

St Brendan's Catholic Primary School

Beanfield Avenue, Corby, NN18 0AZ

Inspection dates 13–14 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Pupils do not make enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Attainment gaps between pupils, for whom the school receives additional government funding, and other groups are widening.
- Support for disabled pupils, and those who have special educational needs, is too variable. The effectiveness of this support is not carefully checked by leaders and managers to secure further improvement.
- Teaching over time is inadequate. Until recently, teachers did not have accurate information on pupils' attainment and progress, in particular the most able, to help them set work at the right level to challenge pupils.
- Behaviour requires improvement because pupils lose concentration and become distracted in lessons when the work is too easy.
- The school has declined since the last inspection; leaders and governors have not demonstrated the capacity to improve teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The school's checks on how well it is doing have not been accurate enough to identify clearly where improvements are needed.

The school has the following strengths

- Children get off to a good start in the Reception classes and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils treat each other with respect. Pupils are well cared for and say they feel safe in school.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils have positive attitudes towards cultural diversity.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 20 lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the acting deputy headteacher. All teachers present during the inspection were observed, as well as teaching assistants working with groups of pupils or individuals.
- Inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons, spoke to pupils during lunchtime and visited play areas at break times.
- Inspectors looked closely at pupils' work in all year groups, listened to pupils read and looked at the quality of displays in the classrooms and around the school. They also looked at information on the school's website.
- Meetings were held with two governors, the acting headteacher, the externally commissioned headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher and teachers with other leadership or management responsibilities. A discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke formally with two groups of pupils and informally with other pupils in lessons and around the school.
- The school's documentation was examined. This included: the school's action plan; the school's information about pupils' progress and the support given to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs; evidence about the quality of teaching; and records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed by parents as they dropped off their children at the beginning of the day and 43 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Christine Mayle, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Carol Worthington

Additional Inspector

Mark Cordell

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils attending the school are of White British heritage.
- 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 well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. In this school, this additional government funding is for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been staff changes since the previous inspection, including that of the headteacher.
- Since the previous headteacher left in the spring term 2014, the deputy headteacher has been the acting headteacher. There have also been changes in the membership of the governing body.
- An experienced headteacher, commissioned by the governing body and local authority, is providing support for leadership.
- The school is working in partnership with a local teaching school to provide training and support for teachers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - providing training and support, in partnership with the local teaching school and other providers, to model the expectations of good or better teaching
 - checking that pupils respond appropriately to the written comments made on their work so that they are ready to move on in their learning
 - making sure that assessment information and checks on pupils' progress are used to set challenging work for pupils, in particular the most able, so they make faster progress.
- Raise achievement by the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that checks on pupils' progress are accurate
 - making sure that the work set is hard enough for the most-able pupils so that more of them achieve the higher levels
 - checking the consistency and impact of the support pupils receive, particularly disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, so that all of them make at least good progress.

- Strengthen leadership and management at all levels and build the capacity of the school to improve by providing a programme of coaching and mentoring for senior and other leaders so that they acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding to:
 - check the quality of teaching
 - develop and use effectively systems to measure the progress of different groups
 - create and implement improvement plans, especially for English and mathematics, that set clear targets for improvement, show how actions will be monitored and evaluated and identify who will check their success
 - set performance targets for teachers that are closely linked to pupils’ achievement.

- Increasing governors’ understanding of, and involvement in, checking and challenging the school’s performance to give them a realistic view of the school’s effectiveness so that they can hold the school’s leaders rigorously to account.

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

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Pupils, including the most able, do not make enough progress from their starting points because leaders have not addressed robustly weaknesses in teaching, identified at the school's previous inspection. As a result, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 is too slow and their achievement is inadequate.
- When pupils leave Year 2 and Year 6, their attainment is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents a steady decline in standards since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils reaching higher levels is below that found nationally.
- From the school's own information on pupils' progress, there are recent signs of improvement in pupils' achievement, but these are not evident across all year groups. The quality of teaching is too variable to make sure that pupils, including the most able, make the progress they should.
- Results in the national check on phonics (how the letters in words relate to their sounds) taken at the end of Year 1 improved in 2013, although they remained below the national average. Pupils in Year 2 who re-took the check did well, performing significantly above the national average. Pupils enjoy reading, are confident to sound out new words, and discuss their books enthusiastically.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are consistently attaining standards below those of other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. The gap has widened and, in 2013, these pupils were over a year behind their classmates in writing and mathematics and nearly two years behind in reading.
- The progress made by disabled pupils, and those who have special educational needs, is too variable. Until recently, their underachievement was not always identified accurately enough to make sure that the support they received addressed their specific learning needs.
- Children start Reception with skills that are expected for their age. They settle into school quickly and get on well together because adults create a welcoming atmosphere for children and their parents.
- The children make good progress in Reception and, at the end of the Reception Year, the proportion reaching a good level of development, particularly in their personal and social skills, is higher than that found nationally. They are well prepared for Year 1.
- The additional funding for primary school sport is being used well to provide specialist physical education training for teaching staff, improve resources and extend the range of activities on offer to pupils both in and out of school. As a result, the quality of learning in physical education is improving. All pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, enjoy participating in physical education, develop their skills and adopt healthy lifestyles.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- The impact of teaching on pupils' progress over time is inadequate and has not maintained standards since the previous inspection. Not enough teaching is good or outstanding.

- Until recently, teachers did not have access to accurate information on pupils' attainment and progress. As a consequence, the work pupils are given does not stretch and challenge all abilities. Pupils, particularly the most able, find the work too easy.
- The impact of the support for disabled pupils, and those who have special educational needs, receive is uneven. Checks, recently introduced by school leaders, on the effectiveness of this support have not operated long enough to be able to show the impact on the progress these pupils make.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and provide written comments and oral feedback that help the pupils to understand how to improve. However, teachers do not check that pupils have responded to the comments they have made.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' handwriting so that written work is presented at a high standard in all subjects. Pupils take pride in their work.
- Teaching in the Reception classes is good. Staff have received support from a local authority adviser to help them to improve the accuracy of their assessments so that activities are engaging and build on the children's experiences, both indoors and outside the classroom.
- There are examples of good and, occasionally, outstanding teaching and these are now being identified and shared to improve the quality of teaching across the school. For example, pupils in Year 6 were seen to make good progress in their understanding of coordinates. Staff skilfully ensured that all pupils understood the tasks they were set. The pupils responded well and worked together to tackle increasingly difficult problems. The teacher and teaching assistant helped any who needed additional support to understand the topic, so that they too were successful in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. During the inspection, pupils' conduct was good in and around the school; most were keen to learn and focused well on tasks they were set. However, behaviour requires improvement because pupils lose concentration and become distracted when the work is too easy and does not make them think hard. They are not yet confident to apply their learning in different situations.
- Pupils are respectful towards one another and they enjoy earning rewards for their behaviour and work. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and contribute to the warm, family atmosphere in the school. This was particularly illustrated in the excitement generated, from both staff and pupils, as chicks hatched in an incubator situated near the main entrance. Children shared their delight with each other and with their teachers, making sure they walked past very quietly so as not to frighten the chicks.
- Pupils respond well to the responsibilities they are given, such as being playground monitors and representing their classmates on the school council.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. New, and more effective systems have recently been applied for both safeguarding and monitoring behaviour. Prior to this action, records were not sufficiently well arranged and organised to provide an overview of behaviour and safety, or to record any changes for individuals or groups of pupils. Nevertheless, leaders ensure that access to the school building is secure and that staff are rigorously checked for their suitability.

- Pupils are well cared for and say they feel safe in school. Parents agree and also say their children are happy at school.
- Pupils have a sound awareness of different types of bullying, including name-calling and that related to the use of the internet. They say bullying is rare but, when they fall out with one another, adults quickly help them to make friends again. Pupils know what to do and who to go to if they need help.
- Attendance has improved over the last three years so that it is now above average.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders have not checked well enough on teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement. As a result, underperformance has not been tackled robustly and teachers had not received enough guidance on how to improve.
- Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.
- The acting headteacher is not taking a strategic leadership role within the school and is having little influence on the improvements that the school needs to make. Leaders and governors have not demonstrated the capacity to bring about sustained improvement without external support.
- The range of subjects and topics the pupils are taught is broad and relevant but not organised well enough to make sure that the most-able pupils are consistently challenged. Consequently, the school's commitment to equality is ineffective, as pupils of different ability are not making enough progress.
- Although a plan is in place for this year's use of the pupil premium funding, it does not include information about how the impact on pupils' learning will be measured.
- The pace of improvement has quickened since the arrival of an experienced headteacher, commissioned by the local authority, to support the leadership team. This headteacher is providing effective coaching for the deputy headteacher and subject leaders in their roles and responsibilities.
- Together with governors, the commissioned headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher have accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses and produced an action plan that clearly sets out a timescale for rapid improvements. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.
- Much of the recent improvement is the result of productive partnerships and support from the local authority and a local teaching school. This is especially so in raising the quality of teaching through staff training. This process is in its early stages and has yet to produce marked improvement in pupils' achievement. Governors are, rightly, planning to continue this external support at least until a new headteacher is appointed.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. As a result, pupils have positive attitudes towards cultural diversity at home and abroad, reflected in the bright and imaginative displays around the school. Pupils are also able to take part in out-of-school activities, such as musical performances and sports clubs. These are particularly popular

with pupils, and the school has a reputation for its highly successful competitive sport teams within the locality.

- The school meets the government's current requirements for safeguarding, including those for child protection.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The newly appointed and experienced Chair of the Governing Body and governors are gaining a more accurate understanding of the school's weaknesses. In the past, governors have been too reliant on reports from leaders, which gave too positive a view of the school's performance. As a result, the governing body has not held leaders to account for the quality of teaching over time and the underachievement of pupils.
- Governors have recently had training, particularly in the interpretation of assessment data, to better equip them to form their own view of the school's performance. Although they show some understanding of the arrangements to manage the performance of teachers, they have not questioned robustly enough the link between this, the progress pupils make and the award of pay rises.
- Governors have not been rigorous in their questioning of leaders about the impact of the pupil premium funding on achievement and an external review is recommended to assist governors in managing this responsibility. However, they have made sensible decisions about the use of the primary school sport funding. As a result, pupils are already enjoying a wider range of physical education and sporting activities.

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	122044
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	440585

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	310
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eamonn McAuley
Headteacher	Carol Connolly (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2011
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